

LIFE OF SAINT CAMILLUS



From the death-mask of St. Camillus preserved in his room.

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by
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NEW YORK
SHEED & WARD

1946

FIRST PUBLISHED 1946
BY SHEED AND WARD, INC.
63 FIFTH AVENUE,
NEW YORK, 3

DE LICENTIA SUPERIORUM ORDINIS
MARTIN D'ARCY, S.J.
PRAEP. PROV. ANGLIAE

13 Dec. 1945

NIHIL OBSTAT: EDOUARDUS CAN. MAHONEY, S. TH. D.
Censor deputatus

IMPRIMATUR: E. MORROGH BERNARD, VIC. GEN.

WESTMONASTERII, DIE 8 MAII, 1946

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

INTRODUCTION

WHEN I was first asked to write a Life of St. Camillus for Denmark, I feared I might not find here sufficient material for a book which, while short, should yet be 'scientific' and up to date. But the Camillan Fathers of Aalborg most kindly sent me literature in French, Spanish, English, German, Italian and indeed American, which convinced me that while much yet remains to be done as to the history of the Camillan Order, nothing substantial is likely to be discovered hereafter about the Saint himself.

St. Camillus de Lellis lived a life of extreme publicity. Witnesses to his work and character were innumerable. He might have been canonised at once after his death had not Urban VIII (1623-1644) insisted upon new and stringent rules about canonisation. Hence the official examination of Camillus's career (1618-1629) produced masses of information else un hoped-for; 31 MS. volumes and a multitude of other documents were the result; and, almost more important, Prospero Lambertini, afterwards Benedict XIV, by his intensive study of the 'process' of Camillus, was inspired to write his magisterial work on Beatification and Canonisation. One may say that that 'process' is a watershed in the history of Canonisation.

Fr. Sanzio Cicatelli was for 25 years a companion of Camillus and possessed an enormous dossier of what concerned him even before the Saint died. In 1615 he produced his biography which was re-edited four times before his death in 1627. He had however to omit much for fear of offending many still alive; nor could he use the material accumulated during the Process of Canonisation. Fr. Dolera in 1742, and following editions, incorporated

his and more, and the method of merely *padding* Ciccattelli's work continued to our own times, thereby dulling not a little (I feel) his vivacious style. Nor could his work fully satisfy modern standards of criticism. In fact, hardly any serious research seems to have been attempted till the advent of Fr. Mario Vanti, M.I. This scholar has indeed deserved well of St. Camillus. His *Life of the Saint* (1929) utilised all that was already known but also a great deal of unedited material; and as time went on he made many discoveries of manuscripts written by the Saint himself, and much that enabled him to correct Ciccattelli himself on points, e.g., of chronology. His monographs on the hospitals of Santo Spirito and San Giacomo, on the Plague at Milan in 1630, and other works, display a massive erudition, a treatment of his material which is at once sincere, sober, and yet light-handed and transfused with a sense of humour refreshing to meet with anywhere, but not least in the *Life of a Saint*. The same qualities are met with in the Camillian magazine *Domesticum*.

For the sake of brevity I seldom refer to authorities, but may say here once and for all that I rely almost wholly on Fr. Vanti as to what concerns directly St. Camillus; as for the period or what preceded and followed it, I have used the standard books or notes I had previously taken. Nor have I tried to write what is 'edifying': if a Saint is truthfully portrayed—even his imperfections or 'eccentricities' undisguised—he provides the edification without impertinent comments by the author.

I feel that this book should, in some sense, express my gratitude not only to St. Camillus (whose birthday, I like to reflect, is also mine) but to so many hospitals that I have known either as patient or as visiting the sick there. My first priestly experience was in the Incurables' Hospital at Donnybrook, Dublin; and during the previous

war many of my happiest hours were spent in military hospitals. And again, I have to thank so many surgeons, doctors or nurses who have ministered to me personally, or whose cheerful self-sacrifice I have so much admired. Certainly I would wish that all of them should have the added grace of the Catholic Faith; for there is a Catholic way of looking at life and still more, at death; and if it is happier to live in a Catholic atmosphere, it is almost necessary to die in one, if that tremendous act of Death is to be accomplished with full spiritual satisfaction. And St. Camillus would assuredly have agreed that the Sacraments of the Sick are more likely to be administered if a hospital staff is not afraid to tell the dying that they are gravely ill. In this hour, then, when so many thousands of—dare I say?—‘innocent sinners’ are being hurled into the next world, or crawling into it in agony, may St. Camillus pray especially for the battlefields, and for the famine and pestilence that stalk in the wake of war. And may we, who all of us are sick, be ever more vitally incorporated into Christ, in whom alone is everlasting health.

C. C. Martindale, S.J.
Copenhagen; 1943–45.

P.S.—The last sentence has been left unaltered. These pages were published in Danish (Arnold Busck), in the translation kindly made by Fru Benedicta Berggreen and Count Christian Holstein-Lövenörn, somewhat before this publication of the English original in London. We thank all who co-operated in this.

PART I

I

THE Apennines, marching southwards through Italy, reach the Adriatic north-west of Rome, and the province of Abruzzo may be said to be wholly composed of these mountains, plunging in precipices or sinking by soft valleys into the Umbrian plain on the one side, and on the other to the sea. The towns, crowning masses of rock, look still like the fortified citadels that they mostly used to be, yet the loveliest vegetation softens all the contours—the deep pure green of fig-trees: the bronzed and purple-flushed foliage of vines: the dark and austere dignity of cypresses piercing upwards through the silvery mist of olives. The Abruzzesi were the descendants of those sturdy Samnites who bowed the Roman necks under the Caudine Forks, and I am convinced that even to-day they retain something of that special heredity, the more so as their territory is away from the great roads that led armies or commerce up and down Italy from time immemorial.¹ Italians differ very much among themselves, though all of them possess that unique endowment of “Italianità” which has been of such incalculable service to civilisation. I had once for friend a chauffeur from the Abruzzi: like his compatriots he was shrewd, yet child-like; cool, and yet fiery; something of a philosopher and very much of an artist . . . yet with all this he seemed to me to possess exactly that special quality that I expected: there was a certain added simplicity, robustness,

¹ Since I wrote this, circumstances have changed. Armies have marched all along the Abruzzi coasts and into the Abruzzi mountains. Pescara, even Chieti, are no more unknown names.

independence such as you might observe in Westmorland or Brittany, though alas, in England you would nowhere look for just that "culture" which is due to the immemorial Italian tradition—*Italianità*.

In the 9th century, Saracen pirates used to infest the coast and, so it is said, destroyed a town there, Buca. The inhabitants fled up the Apennines, and settled on a hill-top some 1,000 feet above sea-level and made a new town, destined to be called, as now, Bucchianico. The town lies some way south of the Abruzzi capital Chieti. In the 15th century, the great gate of S. Urbano, flanked by four medieval towers, had formed part of a Benedictine monastery, and here Braccio di Montone, a famous condottiere, established himself to repel the attacks of another such adventurer, Muzio Sforza, and thus and by other deeds of valour the little town earned from René of Anjou, king of Naples, within whose realm it lay, the title of 'brave and loyal'. The second most noble family of Bucchianico were the De Lellis (a name spelt in many different ways): there was a legend that they had descended from the magnificent Roman clan of the Laelii, and presumably had found their way into these remote mountains when Totila, king of the Goths, sacked Rome in 546, and dispersed the patrician families far from the capital. It cannot be claimed that these traditions have much reliability; still, it is always pleasant to observe what is continuous, and after all, the Lellis must have got their name somehow. In 1239, at anyrate, Ugo de Lellis emerges as a famous warrior under the Emperor Frederick II, that mysterious man, 'Stupor Mundi', after whom the whole world went gaping. From then on, the name of the Lellis recurs more and more often in history, and we could collect a long list of lawyers, prelates, poets, statesmen, who lent glory to the family. Of these I will mention only two—Simone De Lellis of

Teramo, who in three Councils—Pisa, Basel and Constance—worked towards the healing of the Great Schism; and Theodoro De Lellis (1428–66), destined to be Cardinal, who had often acted as Nuncio for the Holy See, and on being sent by Callixtus III to Rouen did almost more than anyone to rehabilitate the memory of St. Joan of Arc and to pave the way for that canonisation which our own days have witnessed.

About the beginning of the 16th century was born Giovanni De Lellis, who left his native town of Chieti to establish himself at Bucchianico where he possessed lands. Here he fell in love with a young noblewoman, Camilla De Compellis, and married her there probably in 1525. She was tall, gentle, most modest and simple, and most generous with her alms. Her life was almost necessarily a retired one, since her husband was constantly away. Like his father and uncle, and half the men of his dreadful period, he was insanely in love also with war. His military career began with the battle of Pavia in 1525; he took part with the Bourbon duke in the sack of Rome in 1527. Disgraceful as was this event, we cannot put responsibility for its excesses on the shoulders of any subordinate. There is no evidence that Giovanni took part in the rapes, lootings, and other horrors of the sack: many gave witness not only to his courage, but to the respect in which he was held—he was a “good Christian, feared God and justice, and went to Mass every morning.” It remains that you must expect a good many anomalies in a 16th century soldier! After the sack of Rome, he shared in the defence of Naples: then (1530) in the siege and taking of Florence; from 1535 to 1538 he took part in the third war that made northern Italy miserable, and again in the fourth, when he had to cover the retreat of his associates which he did with honour. This was in 1544, and afterwards he took part in the war

between Philip II and Pope Paul IV, and finally received the command of 500 men to defend the Adriatic coast against Turks and pirates.

Meanwhile, a son, Giuseppe, had been born to him and Camilla, but he died in childhood. The years passed, and it looked as if they were to have no heir. Suddenly, when Camilla was all but 60 years old, white of hair and wrinkled, she felt she was again to become a mother. She had a dream in which she saw her baby, his breast signed with the cross, and followed by a troop of children similarly signed. Strangely enough she interpreted this dream pessimistically. She thought she would give birth to a future bandit, destined to spread terror and death everywhere, and that the children following him stood for his executioners. They tried to console her, and indeed she had other dreams, telling her that her son would be a saint. As the time for his birth approached, she deserted the nearer churches that she loved, and hid herself in little shrines a mile or two away.

1550 was a Year of Jubilee for the whole Church, and May 25 was a specially great feast at Bucchianico, being the day sacred to St. Urban, patron of the city.

Camilla resolved to hear 'at least a low Mass', and during it, as she adored Christ in the Holy Eucharist, she felt her hour was coming. She returned home and began to suffer most terrible pains. One of her companions, with characteristic 'supernatural realism', said that as the child had clearly been miraculously conceived, let him be miraculously born—let her go to the stable that he might lie, like his Saviour, on the straw. Camilla went there, and her son was forthwith born¹ just as the

¹ This stable was changed into a chapel in 1716. We regret the loss of its original appearance, exquisitely simple and dignified as is the new architecture. However, at its side are the stones and brickwork of a much older structure, showing short sturdy pillars and round arches. This is the front of his home.

Elevation of the High Mass was being made. The people, pouring out to watch a military review, instantly heard the news, and from that moment Camilla became called 'Madonna Elisabetta', and men asked what manner of child this should be. As for Giovanni, he was so enchanted that he jumped about all over the house; and when Camilla remonstrated mildly—they were really too old for such an exhibition!—he asked how she could object to his dancing around, "seeing that we have such a big son that we could send him to school this very day!" And indeed the child grew up to be just on two metres and 10 centimetres tall—over 6 ft. 6 in. And his shoulders and chest were broad in proportion: he was dark-complexioned, with dark brown hair and practically black eyes. His death mask shows an extreme aquiline delicacy of feature that I had hardly expected.

Two days after his birth, the child was baptised, and was called Camillo after his mother.¹ The small boy was vivacious and quite beyond the control of his mother: his father, of whom Camillus was at once afraid and fond, could keep him in order while he happened to be at home. But nothing could hold Giovanni for long from his military duties or pleasures; Camillus was startlingly young when he took to playing cards, which afterwards became a perfect frenzy. He kept running away from school, and, says one witness whom it is almost difficult to believe, as an extreme measure he was at last turned out of the house. But he must soon enough have come back, for he himself confessed that 'towards the end of this time' he began to feel a certain liking for pious works—not indeed for helping the sick, but for shepherding pilgrims who might apply for shelter in his home. But

¹ So far as I can see, this is a solitary departure from the baptismal names of his paternal pedigree. Obviously it was given after his mother.

alas, his mother died, in 1563, aged almost 73, and having seen no sign of the fulfilment of her dreams. They gave him a tutor: the tutor could not manage him. His father, then commandant of the fortress of Pescara, used to come to Bucchianico, but not often enough to keep an eye on Camillus: the boy reached adolescence with the reputation of being gay, fantastic, sharp-witted, and very clever at reciting pastoral poems, for which he had an excellent memory.

In 1567, now aged 17, he went off with a friend to enlist with the Venetian forces against the Turks. Unluckily for him, orders arrived from the Spanish Viceroy in Naples to suspend the recruiting. But it was not long before all the great Christian Powers together with Venice joined together for what was nothing less than a crusade against the intolerable devastations due to Turkish assaults: these were a real risk to the whole of eastern Europe. Giovanni, though now an old man, went off with Camillus and two nephews—after all, he had to do something! His mad extravagances and passion for gambling had ruined him: Camillus was all too good a pupil. But in Ancona, father and son fell sick. They began to retrace their steps; however, at the fort of San Lupidio near Loreto, Giovanni relapsed, received the Last Sacraments, and died. As for Camillus, he was destitute. His father could leave him nothing but his sword, his dagger, and his honourable name. Further, he had far from recovered: he suffered from a recurrent ague. A sore opened on his left leg: this became better; but the infection broke out next upon his right foot and ankle: the irritation maddened him and he made it worse by scratching it and using violent remedies. The sore place began to suppurate, and throughout his long life not only proved incurable, but very soon became worse and worse. This sickness, the

exact nature of which must ever remain mysterious, proved a governing factor in his life.

On his way home, he had hobbled as far as Fermo, and there happened to see two Friars Minor passing by. He suddenly felt how utterly without order his life was compared with theirs . . . impetuously he resolved and even vowed to become a Franciscan. He went straight to the friary of S. Bernardino at Aquila, where a brother of his mother's was Guardian, and stated his case. The wise old man saw in Camillus's petition the effect of his disillusionment, since everything had gone wrong for him, and of his depressing illness. And from his life hitherto into a friary was too big a leap. He blessed and encouraged and dismissed him. Camillus felt better, but still had to wear bandages round his leg which he felt disgraceful for a soldier so noticeably well-built as he. He decided therefore to seek a definite cure in the famous hospital of San Giacomo degli Incurabili at Rome.

We are here confronted with a grave difficulty. All previous authors, relying on Cicutelli, say that Camillus entered San Giacomo in 1569, left it the same year, enlisted with the Venetians against the Turks and went to Zara in view of the war being officially declared against the Turks on Feb. 11, 1570. He proceeds to say that a period of violent military activity was followed by a period of inaction which was very bad for discipline; and indeed, Camillus, in a fury over some gambling incident, was on the point of fighting a duel when a sergeant-major stopped him. And further, that in the summer of 1571 he was sent to Corfu for garrison duty and at the same time the great Christian fleet arrived there to prepare to sail to Lepanto. Camillus could have gone there, but lay prostrate between life and death owing to an epidemic of 'naval typhus', dysentery,

which was decimating the Venetian forces. The Last Sacraments were administered to him, and he recovered.

Now Fr. Vanti (*San Giacomo degli Incurabili*, 1938, p. 55) makes it perfectly clear that Camillus went first to San Giacomo in 1571. He has consulted the *Libro degli huomini*, i.e. the register of sick persons admitted to the hospital and finds that Camillus was admitted on March 7, 1571; on March 30 he was sufficiently well to need no more treatment, but stayed on as 'garzone', or servant, for a small salary which is duly recorded as paid month by month till Dec. 31, after which there is no more mention of him. (There are two slightly unusual details in these records—first, Camillus's surname is mentioned, 'de lellis' (sic); as a rule, the surnames of admissions were *not* written in these records: and second, the cause of his departure is not mentioned though as a rule the reason of departure *is* given—in Camillus's case, this was for charity's sake, the reason being that his mania for gambling when he ought to have been doing his proper work had exhausted the patience of the officials. Camillus was, then, at San Giacomo from March 7, 1571 to Dec. 31 at any rate. Moreover, Cikatelli gives evidence against himself, for he says that at the end of Camillus's first stay there he was dismissed by the Maestro di Casa, the Neapolitan Angelo. But from the beginning of 1568 till March 1571 (when he died) the Maestro di Casa was Don Francesco Pecorella. He was succeeded, from August to the end of 1571, by, precisely, the Neapolitan Angelo Melvio, so none of Camillus's military activities, as related by Cikatelli can have taken place when he says they did; and Camillus was absent from Lepanto not because he was lying sick at Corfu, but because he was then serving at San Giacomo.

Were it worth asking *why* Cikatelli made his mistake we might find a reason in the fact that during 1569 two

men called Camillus were admitted to San Giacomo as patients; one was 'son of John Baptist of Milan' 'with a sick leg', who came in on Aug. 15: but our Camillus entered in March, and his father, though called John, was not John Baptist, and though long ago he had served at Milan among other places, he was definitely from Bucchianico. The other Camillus was 'son of John Paul of Rome', who entered in May for the 'wood-water' treatment (see below) and left in a fortnight. But *if* Cicatelli consulted the records of San Giacomo, he might just possibly have jumped to the conclusion that the Camillus who entered 'with a sick leg' in 1569 was the Saint. But I think it more likely that Camillus told him that he had enlisted in the 'League' (against the Turks) without defining *which* League he meant. For there was a second League, recruiting for which was strongly urged by St. Pius V who did not want the fruits of the victory of Lepanto to be lost. This recruiting took place in Rome between Dec. 1571 (exactly when Camillus was dismissed) and Jan. 1572: Pius wished 5,000 men to be enlisted. Why Camillus chose to enlist with the Venetians rather than in Rome, we cannot tell. But that Camillus fell sick of dysentery in 1572 and not in 1569 is certain also because Corradi in his *Annali delle Epidemie* tells us that that epidemic broke out in Zara in 1571 and continued in the Venetian army till 1572. Next year, to the disgust of the Pope, Venice concluded a separate peace with the Turks and Camillus was demobilised. The problem of chronology is thus solved.

But my difficulty is this—All agree that Camillus left for Ancona to sail for Venice in 1569: all agree that his second enlistment took place after he left San Giacomo, i.e. at the very end of 1571. But hardly had the father and son reached Ancona than they fell sick and Giovanni died. Camillus came back via Fermo to Aquila where he

stayed with his uncle for a 'few days'. 'Then' he went to Rome. But have we not thus at least a year about which we know nothing? Even supposing that Giovanni died towards the *end* of 1569 and that Camillus did not start south quite at once, we cannot give him more than about a month for getting from Ancona to Fermo and thence to Aquila where he stayed 'a few days'; allow him another month for getting to Rome; this seems to leave at least a year during which we know nothing about him. Did he wander about Italy getting work when he could? Did he spend months in Rome, getting always more ill and at last resolving to go to San Giacomo? I cannot see what to answer.

His sojourns at San Giacomo were so important, as was indeed the place itself, that I must give at least a very brief sketch of its history, basing myself almost entirely on Fr. Vanti's monograph, *S. Giacomo degli Incurabili di Roma nel Cinquecento*: Rome 1938, and on his references there. The name was derived from the assumption that venereal disease was incurable. Owing to its vast diffusion after the discovery of America (1492), it became practically endemic in the Spanish and French soldiery and spread appallingly in Italy after the long sojourn of Charles VIII's troops at Naples (1494-1496). Hence besides the name syphilis derived from an astounding poem, thus entitled, by Girolamo Fracastoro (1539), it was variously called the American, the Neapolitan, the Spanish (and in Italy of course) the French disease, and the 'leprosy of St. Job.' Its enormous spread was largely due to the new paganism of the times; and the Missal contained a Mass *contra morbum Gallicum* till the reform of Pius V. The misery that this occasioned was unspeakable, because of the disgust it inspired, its extreme infectiousness, the bewilderment of doctors, and the lack of hygienic safeguards. Leo X in 1515 gives an appalling account of these

sufferers in Rome "to which the poor sick, suffering from incurable disease, stream together from all parts of the world". The use of mercury and cauterisation was known: but deaths from the simultaneous application of these were so numerous that their application was at times forbidden: by the second half of the 16th century, however, it was no more thought that the disease was incurable though the name remained. The first foundation for "incurables", was that of Genoa (1499), due to that heroic pioneer, Ettore Vernazza, himself the disciple of St. Catterina Fieschi-Adorno, a woman in her time far more remarkable than Florence Nightingale. By 1523, other such hospitals had been opened in Rome, Bologna, Savona, Naples, Vicenza, Florence, Brescia, Venice, Padua, and others, to mention only Italy.

A hospital had been opened in Rome by Cardinal Giacomo Colonna and put on firmer foothold in 1339 by his kinsman Cardinal Pietro Colonna: in 1451, Nicholas V entrusted it to the Society of 'Our Lady del Popolo', and some fifty years later this was replaced by the 'Company of Divine Love' to which the future Leo X and very many Cardinals and great men of Rome belonged. In 1515, when he was Pope, he erected it into an Arch-hospital, making it head of all 'Incurables' hospitals everywhere, and in a superb and most pathetically realist Bull defines that by 'incurables' are meant all *who suffer from diseases*, the French disease included. The constitutions of the Naples hospital give an appalling list of the diseases to be attended to. Leo assigned to it 4 Guardians with a council of 12, half to be Romans, half non-Romans; two Auditors to control its finances, and 4 Visitors, who should seek out suitable cases within Rome itself. But, as I have said, he insisted that the sick flowed into Rome from all sides and made

a pitiable spectacle dragging themselves about the city in their little vehicles, repelling rather than attracting help by the hideous sight and stench of their diseases. Between 1515 and 1520 the whole hospital was transformed and its little church was rebuilt on an octagonal plan and called Our Lady Gate of Paradise. In it Camillus was to say his first Mass. The hospital was constantly enlarged, notably by Cardinal Salviati in 1600 and by Gregory XVI in 1842, so not much of the original structure remains, though you still can see the numbers, in certain rooms, that were over the beds and some 'sanitary niches'. The terrible sack of Rome in 1527 had destroyed innumerable good works, including the Company of Divine Love; yet the population of Rome constantly increased, and with it, the number of sick, many of whom, who could not be accepted by ordinary hospitals because of the appalling nature of their disease, were frightened to enter San Giacomo precisely because they considered themselves incurable and thought that to enter it meant to die there. A whole series of splendid engravings, beginning from 1551, allows us to follow the architectural development of San Giacomo; but though Salviati, when he built his magnificent church there, respected the original little church which remained on its right, Comporesi, between 1842 and 1849, pulled it down for the sake of symmetry or perhaps because he wished to build new quarters for some of the hospital service. Hence so little remains of the original structure that we will but say that it was admirably designed and ventilated: the great ward for men ran right across from the Via Lata to the Strada di Ripetta and the parallel one for women seems to have been almost as long: the great façades at either end corresponded. There were other wards and large gardens or orchards between the main buildings and beside them. The arms of the Hospital represented a

sick man in his little carriage, doing homage to his Patrons, Our Lady and St. James.

The only problem that remained was: Could the intellectual, moral and spiritual level of the staff be kept up to the requisite standard? The answer is: Not for long at a time. Hence a constant need of reform, never unattended to. However, an interesting episode in the history of San Giacomo was due to the discovery of the wood *guaiaco* (*Guajacum officinale*) now no more much used. This was an ancient Indian remedy imported into Spain from America by the Spanish doctor Consalvo in 1508 and obtaining its maximum celebrity in Italy between 1520 and 1530. Ulric von Hutten having experienced personally the extreme utility of the 'Wood-Water' or wood-syrup (*Acqua di Legno*) made from it, sang its glories in a pamphlet called *De guaiaci medicina et morbo gallico* (1519). He called it the 'sacred' wood, and everywhere it became known as the Most Holy American Wood, granted by the mercy of God for the succour of humanity: Frascatoro, in the third canto (!) of his poem, acclaimed it as the Hope of Mankind, the new Glory of the World. Doctors experimented with it, quacks played tricks with it—it became very nearly a panacea though the purpose of its original application remained dominant. Still, Paolo Manuzio used it to cure his bad eyes and catarrh: Tasso was recommended to use it for his 'melancholic humour': a Messina priest obtained a special pontifical indult, valid for ever, to make use of it in curing cases of the Gallic sickness and all ills proceeding from it, accepting a modest fee from the rich, but serving the poor gratis, and exhorting all alike to confession. The details of the cure were appalling—you were violently purged, fierce perspiration was provoked, a strict diet was imposed, the wards were kept hot to suffocation-point—you can imagine why patients described

the 'cure', which lasted usually forty days (though Cardinal de' Medici in 1534 had fifty) as a Lent, if not a Purgatory. . . . Enough to say, just here, since we are keeping to what concerned Camillus, that it was not till 1636 that the value of the cure was seriously doubted and then suspended; it was renewed, with improvements, after Innocent X (1644-1655), but it was most intensively applied between 1569 and 1602, which was just the period of the transformation and vast development of the hospital, chiefly due to Salviati and the group surrounding him. It was he who largely financed the administration of the very expensive Wood-Water. Such was the influx, moreover, of patients, that beds had to be borrowed from Santo Spirito, the Lateran, the Consolation, the Trinità dei Pellegrini, the Brothers of St. John of God in the Tiber Island and elsewhere. Flocks of attendants had to be organised during the time of special preparation which lasted usually from February to May. Doctors wore blue overalls; nurses, red. The Rules of the Hospital for this period are very entertaining: a woodcut at the foot of one page shows a gambler being hoisted on to a man's back and flogged under the eye of a judge: further, a group is being rebuked for playing cards.

To this hospital, then Camillus came and was admitted as patient on March 7, 1571. The inventory of his clothes shows that he arrived with a tunic of old black cloth, a shirt of white linen, stockings of white cloth, socks of the same. Hat and shirt in a pack.

On March 30 he became a servant in the hospital, for his board and lodging and about 2s. 6d. (three lire relatively in modern Italian money) a month. In May, he was among those charged with preparing the Acqua del Legno. At the end of December he had exhausted the patience of the Superintendent, and was turned out. Cicatelli's MS. 'life' says: "he was an appalling hot-head

(*di molto terribile cervello*), constantly quarrelling with one or the other of the servants. And also because being so obsessed by card-playing that he would often desert the service of the sick and go off across the Tiber to play with the Tiber boatmen". The Superintendent had constantly rebuked him for this but had never obtained the slightest improvement: finally, having found a pack of cards under Camillus's pillow, he turned him out. Even apart from this general irresponsibility and quarrelsomeness, gambling was a sufficient reason for dismissal. It was now that he re-enlisted, went to Zara and then Corfu, and there fell desperately sick of dysentery. However, he recovered and saw service. He took part in the assault by land and sea of the Turkish stronghold of Barbagno, having sailed thither under fire: the final assault cost the attacking forces much: they went quite mad not only with rage but with the fearful hunger they had suffered: they dug the livers out of dead Turks and devoured them. Camillus relates this himself, but acknowledges that he revolted against this cannibalism and lived on grass and horse-flesh.

On March 1, 1573, Venice to the dismay of Rome, concluded a separate peace with the Turks. Camillus, now unemployed, returned to Rome and accepted the pay of Spain, Philip II planning an attack on Tunis. Meanwhile he had amassed not a little money. Needless to say that almost at once he lost it all—even his cloak ('that relic of nobility'). He met a boyhood friend from Bucchianico, and implored him not to mention his deplorable condition. Indeed, he got himself enrolled in the company of a certain captain named Fabio, so famed was it for its high play. He was sent with three other companies to the reinforcement of the fortress so well known to us now as La Goulette; but the commandant disdained this help and the soldiers sailed back to Palermo,

and thus escaped the appalling sack of that fortress by the Turks on Sept. 24. At Palermo he lost anything that he had recently accumulated, and on his way back to Naples, very nearly lost also his life in violent gales, which so terrified him that he renewed his vow to become a Franciscan. That was on Oct. 24, 1574.

At Naples, storm and vow were alike forgotten. He gambled away his sword, his dagger, his powder-flask and his coat—perhaps consoling himself that in this same city, before sailing for Africa, he had lost his very shirt, and had had to take it off in the very street. Afterwards, over the stone bench on which the gamblers had been sitting, a ‘very quaint’ picture was erected, representing the future Saint thus stripping himself. A lamp burned before it, and mothers used to come and pray there for their sons, Camillans anyhow in the sense that they were mad for play.¹

It was November, and despite rumours of wars in the Balkans and perhaps in Africa, there was no real hope of more fighting till the spring. Camillus, with a fellow-soldier, Tiberio, wandered north and reached Manfredonia. Here they had no choice but to become thieves or beggars. Though to ‘beg’ he was bitterly ‘ashamed’, he could not steal, and on Nov. 30 began to ask alms at the door of the main church. His remarkable physique, the nobility of his features, and certainly the tragedy of his expression, attracted a certain Antonio di Nicastro, who asked him if he would like to earn at least some food. Would he do some work for the Capuchins? Camillus, taken aback, said he must ask his companion. Antonio agreed and made an appointment at his home, when he should hear his decision. Tiberio would not hear of it, and dragged Camillus away, much against his will. As they proceeded, Camillus remembered his vow, and

¹ I hold that attempts to soften down this story are not successful.

asked himself whether this offer had not been God's way of leading him to fulfil it. They were approaching Barletta, and asked some muleteers whether they would find work there. The answer was a categorical No. Camillus, desperate, felt he was under no more obligation to his friend, despite their promise to stick together. He rushed back the twelve miles they had travelled from Manfredonia, and arrived there before daybreak. Antonio, patient man, welcomed him and escorted him to the Capuchin Guardian, who dismissed a disloyal servant, and entrusted Camillus with two mules for bringing stones, water, lime and so forth to a building in course of construction. You can hardly, today, form a guess of what it meant to the young nobleman—as he felt himself despite his career and circumstances—to accept this servile task. Accept it, however he did, grace and starvation driving him. He considered, moreover, that in undertaking this mean task for Capuchins he was sufficiently fulfilling his vow—so much so, that when the friars, distressed to see him shivering in the bitter cold of mid-winter, offered him some of the rough serge they made their own habits of, he passionately refused it, lest it should somehow trick him into joining the Order.

A terrible fortnight passed during which he constantly thought of running away. On Dec. 13 he decided that anyhow he might ask for a day off. By chance, he was refused and given extra work. He flew into a tempest of rage, biting his very hands in fury, and made off without leave. The Capuchins, who understood him better than he did himself, persuaded him to return, and offered him a scudo—5 lire,—a month. He accepted—partly because, in his entangled motives, he foresaw earning enough money to enable him to return to war and to gambling. Whereupon Tiberio came back and actually joined Camillus for a time at his work, but soon

enough considered it too exhausting and beneath him. He tried to persuade Camillus to leave it, but this time he held good, though maddened by the continual mockery of children, who jeered at the ex-soldier who still wore rags of his uniform, including the sash of his dagger which he would not be parted from.

The building came to an end. The Capuchins, however, pleased with Camillus's honesty and undoubted nobility of character despite his violent temper and what they knew of his gambling-sickness, for it was nothing less, kept him in the service of the convent. One day they sent him to a friary some 12 miles off to buy some wine. The eve of his return, the Guardian took him aside, and, in a vine-covered arbour, spoke to him about God, and sin, and how, when evil thoughts beset him, he must 'spit in the face of the devil'. All that was best in Camillus awoke: he saw "How much I ought to do for the service of God and the salvation of my soul". Next day, perched on his mule with two wine-skins slung on either side, he returned, and on the way a real conflict declared itself within him. And a certain moment came when his soul was broken up. He flung himself off his mule on to the rocky road, and burst into floods of tears at the clear sight of what his life had been. It was Feb. 2, 1575, feast of the Purification, which he was ever afterwards to call the day of his conversion.

When Saul was struck from his horse, he heard the vision of our Lord say to him: "It is hard for thee to kick against the goad". Now that has no meaning save that for long, and not just for a moment, he had been feeling the divine onslaught. You cannot kick against a goad for one moment only, still less, find it 'hard' to do so. That implies a long-drawn experience. When did Saul begin his real, though unconscious, resistance to grace? Possibly from the very moment when he, like the

others, saw the face of Stephen 'as it were the face of an angel'. Probably that is why Saul, the most sensitive of men, flung himself so passionately into the persecution of the Christians. So long as they so much as existed, his whole way of life, his whole habit of mind hitherto his innermost self, were being challenged. Hence what I believe to have been his mixture of fury and agony when he watched the faces of the Christians whom he dragged out of their homes to death, or disaster. Saul must always have been a saint at heart, else he could never have been such a sinner.

Hence we must affirm that never so far have we seen the true Camillus. On that Feb. 2 no totally new Camillus was created and substituted for the old one. There had always been a nobility of character, a contempt for the mean and unworthy—a contempt too for himself when he saw himself constantly being a mere victim, *unable* to conquer the frenzy that kept reducing him to ignominy. But that would not have been enough. I must here mention a strange fact. Throughout his reckless, most abandoned youth, it seems quite certain that he had kept himself chaste. Not that he was not tempted, probably as violently as he was in every other way. Else why should he have so treasured those words: "When you have evil thoughts, spit in the devil's face"? For treasure them, and use them when counselling others, he for ever did. It does not seem to me enough to say a man may be so possessed by one vice, that the whole of his 'lower self' may sufficiently pour itself out into and through that, as when you may meet a man who is a habitual and seemingly hopeless drunkard and yet lives a perfectly chaste life. I think Mat Talbot is an example of that; I mean, of a man who combined drunkenness with chastity. One might have thought that Camillus just expended the whole of his passionate life in gambling.

But no. He had the most unbridled temper, and men who let themselves go to fits of fury are not likely to control themselves in other ways. They probably yield to the fierce instinct of the moment. Fr. Vanti thinks that his innate sense of 'nobility' may have saved him. Is this probable? It was the habit of that period precisely (and alas of others) to assume that nobility of birth exempted you from any sexual self-control, and indeed, that you exhibited your prowess by your amorous conquests. One might more easily argue that Camillus was and to the end remained fundamentally a *hard* man, and was often a very rough man. Yet I have never noticed that physical, temperamental, or athletic 'hardness' has in any way checked a man from yielding to 'soft' sins, even though he may have refused to himself any habitual self-indulgence.

Two reflections occur to me. It is noticeable in the lives of Saints, and indeed in those of ordinary men, that to have preserved personal purity, even if not from the very highest motives, has much facilitated new spiritual perceptions later on. Certain clouds are not there: there is less drag towards animality. This is in a sense but natural; yet in the spiritual sphere the fact is so marked that we are less amazed by the great change that came about in Camillus, however various may have been the stimuli that actually brought it to a crisis. On the other hand, we wish to emphasise, if only in order to encourage those who know that their life has not been sinless, that the great sinner has often become the great saint, and one may almost say that to be great in the one direction a man must be *able* to be great in another. And we would certainly prefer the man who has sinned violently to the man who simply from flaccid 'neutrality' has never done anything very wrong—so far as the likelihood of his becoming *first rate* in the service of God or man may go.

In short, we have known those who have carefully guarded their purity either because of a mysterious instinct, or deliberately, tediously, against strong, recurrent, maybe continuous temptation, to have preserved a sort of limpidity of mind enabling them very quickly to 'see God', and, seeing Him, to love Him with all their heart—their heart had had one element within it which had always been undivided. And we have known others who behaved as badly in the matter of purity as Camillus did with his uncontrolled savage temper and his reckless gambling, of whom we felt absolutely sure that in reality they were somehow 'good men'—we could not see *why*, but we knew that God could, and were sure He did.

The old Guardian at San Giovanni Rotondo, then, was perfectly right in feeling no less sure that Camillus, despite all appearances, was really a strong, noble and exalted character deep within himself.

II

Camillus, in whom the 'new'—that is, the 'real' self had, by the grace of God triumphantly emerged, full of gratitude, of horror for sin and resolve never to commit any more the slightest venial sin (nor, so far as he could tell, did he, though every characteristic of his special temperament survived), and to do penance as a Franciscan, went as rapidly as he could to Manfredonia, flung himself at the Guardian's feet, and implored the astounded man for leave to join his Order. The Guardian, though overjoyed, said he must consult superior authority. Camillus, himself overjoyed even by this concession, flung himself into all the hardest work of the house, and embarked on a career of penance so severe that the Guardian himself felt sorry for him and begged him to mitigate it.

At last the leave was given : the wound on the right foot seemed no reason for hesitation. He was sent to the town Trivento, at a considerable distance, to begin his noviciate. He went on foot. On his way, he had to cross a river. He began to ford it, when he heard a voice crying out : "Don't do it! don't do it ! do not cross !" It was dark and he could not see whence the voice might come, save that it seemed high up. He prayed, and slept in the riverside scrub. Next day two Capuchins, also on the way to Trivento, met him, and said that he would certainly have been swept away by the water. And indeed, Italian torrents, in the summer, seem often very shallow if not almost waterless, and yet, in the middle, the current streams ferociously. He felt his guardian angel had saved him.

At Trivento, he took the lowest place of all : his flamboyant insolence seemed utterly to have disappeared, Long years later, his novice-master, grown old and blind, still remembered how all used to speak of him as the *Frate umile*—the humble Brother. But a thunderbolt fell from the clear sky. Either because the rough Franciscan habit rubbed against his foot, or for some other cause, his wound re-opened and became angry and caused him intolerable pain. Superiors had to tell him that he could not remain a novice so long as it was like that, but added, that should it entirely heal over, he could be re-admitted. They parted with deep regret from a man who would have been in despair had he not felt that much more penance and sacrifice of self-will was required of one who had spent so many years of dissolute life. He left for Rome, hoping to gain the Jubilee indulgences of 1575, and to seek re-entrance to San Giacomo, bringing, presumably, letters of recommendation from the Capuchins, else it is at least doubtful if he would have been re-admitted after his previous eviction !

The records of the hospital in fact show that he was thus re-admitted on Oct. 23, 1575, being sick of the leg, and possessing a black tunic, a vest, thick white drawers, a hat and a shirt. He remained as patient till Nov. 18 and next day once more became a servant there, holding down his job till June 20, 1579. Indeed, he did better than hold it down. On Feb. 28, 1576 till April 24, he was sick and received no pay, being attended to gratis. On May 22, he had recovered and was appointed 'infirmarian' with a somewhat increased salary with servants under him. Here he remained till Sept. 14 of that year. Then, we do not know why, he himself returned to being a servant, till March 22, 1577. And from that date till June 20, 1579, when he left the hospital, he held the office of *Guardaroba*, and, judging by the frequent recurrence of his name on the books, he acquitted himself with exceptional merit. If this position implied the supervision of the whole of the material effects of the hospital, it was certainly a responsible one. During his stay there he underwent a severe inguinal rupture, though whether this has to do with the illness above mentioned, involving his being put to lighter work when he had sufficiently recovered, and then sent back to being a servant when he got still better, I can see no evidence. Anyhow the rupture caused him grave suffering to the end of his life.

Not only he certainly did his work in San Giacomo to perfection, but he was intimately concerned in becoming a man ever more according to Christ, and for that, knew that he needed direction. Now Rome in that year 1575 was full of Saints, but not all of them lived there. The true apostle of Rome was St. Philip Neri, founder of the Oratory (d. 1595). I know of very few Saints to compare with this extraordinary man, though St. Francis de Sales (d. 1622) had something of his wonderful charm, and

St. Vincent de Paul (d. 1660), much of his *bonhomie*. But Francis was a great nobleman, and Vincent an organiser on an enormous scale and in constant touch with the Court: Philip was at his ease, of course, with men of every rank from royalties to the poorest, but he was so in his homely, bluff yet gentle and most amusing way. (I permit myself an occasional smile at the thought of Philip's encounters with the stately Spaniard, Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius loved him, and he Ignatius: but I don't know what the Jesuit Founder thought of Philip's habit of seizing hold of people he talked to by some button of their dress and twisting it about while he talked till it came off.) This fascinating Saint, then, of whose immeasurable influence in Rome Camillus must have heard long before this, was sought out by him on the grounds that "I, who have been so great a sinner, have *need* of a great Saint!" Philip welcomed him, and evidently, in a flash, understood the young man perfectly. Camillus was 25, but old, I think, for his years: Philip was 60, but in a real sense still a boy. The Saint heard Camillus's confession weekly and allowed him Communion on all Sundays and feast days—much, at that time.

But it had never occurred to Camillus that he was to remain at San Giacomo. His wound seemed to be healed—permanently, he hoped. He went to St. Philip and reminded him of his vow, and said he wished to return to the Capuchins. Philip advised him not to try that life again. Camillus insisted: his vow weighed heavy on him; he wished for more opportunities of penance; perhaps he was still rather obstinate about taking advice. Philip smiled, and told him that he would certainly come back . . . his wound would not stay healed. Camillus was unmoved, and reminded the Capuchin superior of his promise to take him back: he was accepted and went to Tagliacozzo in the Abruzzo for his new noviciate.

Everyone was delighted with this young giant, whom they at once named Brother Christopher, remembering the hero of legend who had carried Christ on his shoulders across the torrent and had all but sunk beneath the whole world's weight. His life gave nothing but extreme edification to the Friars. All the more severe was the blow, when the wound re-opened, grew angry, and began again to suppurate. The decision of Superiors rhymed indeed with what he recognised as inevitable: he had to return to Rome, resolved, this time, to devote himself for ever to the sick. Philip laughed, and said the fatal words: "I told you so . . .", but received him back most gently among his penitents.

He returned thus yet again to San Giacomo in mid-October 1579. Not only were all delighted to see him, but he was very soon appointed to the extremely important position of *Maestro di Casa*, or "General" Superintendent. The appointment certainly took place in October, though it should normally have done so in December: however, the post was vacant, and Camillus was judged the proper man for it. He retained it till September 1584 (and possibly was honorary *Maestro* still later). Immediately he began to study, feeling the need of a more liberal culture than had hitherto been his. The "General" Superintendent had to supervise the entire 'family' of a hospital, doctors included. 'Guardians' kept him informed of all that happened down to the smallest detail. He had to keep three Books, called the Superintendent-General's Books. The first kept an exact record of the name, home, wages etc. of each of the servants. The second was entirely concerned with finances—gifts, sales, acquisitions, and so forth. The third contained records of the daily expenses. There are three 'Camillan' books covering the whole of his tenure of office. The first and second were happily discovered by Fr. Vanti

in the State Archives of Rome, in 1937. The third Book begins on Aug. 31, 1581 and ends on Aug. 28, 1584. Its existence was known, but after being exhibited in 1911, the book was lost: it was hunted for in vain, till in 1926 it was discovered quite by chance on the then Superintendent's table. From March 1934, Fr. Vanti could examine it at leisure. These books, though their contents are but of secondary interest, are almost entirely in Camillus's own handwriting—small and regular and relatively clear: there are also a number of other documents drawn up or signed by him.

In these are reflected the *official life* of the Saint: though the Maestro was exhorted to show himself, in that life, with paternal charity towards all, having an eye for everything like a good and diligent father of a family, behaviour not always to be met with in officialdom. In so far as the records are financial, I need say but little, save that they reveal Camillus's absolute honesty. When himself in need of money (thus he had not the patrimony needed for ordination, nor, rather later, enough money to get him to Bucchianico), it was not from the hospital that he borrowed. Alms for the hospital had to be sought. The Maestro provided those who asked for them with closed collecting boxes opened weekly or at least fortnightly. These were either carried about the city and even into the country, or could be seen, fixed, in churches, public offices, the antichambers of Cardinals themselves. That of Sta Maria Porta Paradisi had a marble carving above the slot for coins—a sick man, naked save for a bandage or two and a hospital-cap, with hands joined, and squatting in his tiny chariot with wooden wheels: beneath the slot is carved: "Alms for the poor patients of the Incurables" (*Elemosina per li poveri Impatati* (the *ti* had to be squashed into a space above the line) *dell Incurabili*). Here too are marked all gifts in kind and all legacies. Camillus, I may

add, negotiated *barter*s very effectively with Jews who applied to do business with him. In short, I have to say that Camillus showed himself an amazingly acute as well as faithful business man.

At this point we need to say that while the biographers use many generalities about his penitential life, and relate a few instances of his selfmortification, such as, that he would not go to the window to watch processions; that he kept a skull on his table when he ate, and insisted on his measureless self-sacrifices for the sick, we find it difficult to picture that life in any detail unless we build up our idea from lines here and there in documents such as we have mentioned.

Thus two patients were to be sent to the baths at Viterbo. A letter, written in the name and probably at the dictation of Camillus, recommends the men to the charity of the Superintendent there. Enough to say that it begins by recalling that all hospitals are as a rule united (that is, are prepared to co-operate), and all tend towards charity, and then begs the Superintendent to show special kindness to these men, one of whom is Spanish and cannot walk. Camillus insists again and again on this notion of reciprocal charity, from which he knows the patients are going to profit. He takes by no means a merely official nor merely 'clinical' view of them. It is worth insisting on this, because in the hospital itself affectionate nursing fell grievously short of the proper standard. There was no trained permanent staff of nurses or 'servants'. The original confraternity of the Divine Love had, as we said, disappeared. In 1529, the Capuchins had tried to do what they could, and also the Jesuits, but neither of these was a specifically nursing Order and each had a vocation of quite a different sort. Hence the Hospital was staffed by an ever-varying crowd of servants, changing every month, composed of men who took the work on pre-

sumably because they had to, and, in that ease, loathing their disgusting task and quite without 'charity' for the sufferers. Camillus himself devoted every moment that he could to the personal care of the sick: he got leave from St. Philip Neri for a priest to come to hear confessions every week; he ensured the giving of religious instruction whenever it was necessary—and when it was not!—he kept a close watch on the behaviour of the servants, but after two and a half years he could not but own that he had been defeated. This (Aug. 15, 1562) was when it occurred to him that a special Religious Society should be created, for the care of the sick, who should serve them not for pay, but as tenderly as a mother nurses her own sick children.

But both before and after this he had to weather many storms.

He was haunted by the memory of his vow to enter the Capuchin Order. St. Philip gave him reason after reason against it: nothing could move him. He went to Fr. Giovanni Maria di Tusa, then in Rome, and begged him yet again to accept him. The Capuchin categorically refused, and at long last wrote out a very kind, very firm document stating that since Camillus was suffering, as had been absolutely ascertained, from an incurable disease, the Capuchin Constitutions made it impossible for him to enter that Order: and indeed, he had already been admitted into it twice, and had had to be dismissed for the above reason. As for the vow, the mere fact that it was impossible of fulfilment dispensed Camillus from it. You would have thought that that settled it. But no. Camillus began to think that his vow had been made at the sight of two Friars Minor of the Observantines, not of the Capuchins. He applied to the Observantines. They did not answer in a hurry, but doubtless made enquiries, and then refused him. Even so, he was not

satisfied till they too had given him a written document giving the cause of their refusal.

Lest anyone think that I mean merely that the service of hospitals was what we should call very rough, very 'unsatisfactory', I must allude to Cicutelli and other contemporary witnesses, and to wood-cuts. But I must premise that what is described refers (especially the last part) to times of plague, when all organisation broke down. But even in ordinary times, the most well-intentioned hospital-authorities had to employ whom they could find—even banished criminals, even men who were condemned and put to serve in hospitals precisely as *punishment*. Hence, spiritually, you may imagine that the Hospitals were in a terrible condition. "The great part" of the patients had been allowed to die without the sacraments, and unassisted: there had been the very bad practice of ordering men to go to confession the moment they arrived, maybe half delirious with fever; dreadful indignities were inflicted more directly on the Blessed Sacrament, which was given to men who could not swallow, or were violently coughing, or being sick, by terrified priests rushing round in a panic lest they should become infected. The material side of hospitals had been in its way as bad. Men were left without food, or without drink when in a high fever: they were known in their desperation to drink slops, or oil from lamps, and worse. Their beds remained untouched, however weak the patients were, so that they rotted in their own filth. They used to struggle to rise, fall out of bed, and hurt themselves sometimes fatally and die on the floor. Brutal attendants would tie them to their beds, or hit them, or jeer at them.¹ Quite a long list could be made of instances

¹ I wish to avoid any appearance of pharisaism by saying that I have myself known one lunatic asylum where the warders used not only to make cruel fun of the inmates but were often guilty of malpractices with as many of them whose mind was too weak to enable them to exert resis-

of men being carried to the mortuary when not yet dead, either because the assistants did not trouble to make sure whether the dying man really was dead, or because they wanted to get rid of them. Camillus personally once found (not at San Giacomo) a man among the corpses on the mortuary with blood flowing from a wound in his head, due to being thrown violently down among the dead. He helped to carry him back to his bed: he died only three days later. I repeat, this state of things is to be regarded not as normal; it arose when a whole city or countryside was in a state of panic and disorganisation: but the normal condition had been, and still was, bad enough. And to what I have said must be added the fraudulent compacts too often made between hospital officials and the caterers; and even, the more or less culpable negligence shown by doctors and nurses. Therefore Camillus, on the alert, night as well as day, had occasion again and again to rebuke such delinquents, and not very seldom to dismiss them (as he himself had been dismissed), and in fine realised that any improvements he might make in the actual system could only be palliatives: the system itself must be changed.

Still, until a substantial change could be made, he did what he could. In a sense the most difficult, and in another the most easy, reform concerned the spiritual life and the Sacraments. Helped by St. Philip and others he ensured the regular weekly administration of Holy Communion with all decency and devotion. He himself prayed with those who received it, and, with true Italian simplicity, cried aloud his homage to the B.

tance and whose accusations would anyhow not be believed. This is of course exceptional: but it proves that because, today, hospitals and asylums are kept rigorously clean, the moral aspect of the situation may remain practically what it was. A base-minded man will seize his opportunities; and the very sight of the weak constantly tempts the cruel to be more cruel still.

Sacrament itself, as it went to and fro in the wards. Every week, though still a layman, he gave 'instructions to the staff, having always for theme (as St. John in his old age had), the Charity of Christ. His example—the way in which he met new sufferers at the door, washed their feet "in tepid water", devoted himself primarily to the very worst cases, tending "with his bare hands" those whom no servant was willing to approach, such was the reek of their illness, all this was an inspiration to the staff, and Camillus grouped those who were free and prayed with them, as Communion-days became more frequent, in a little chapel. St. Philip had already banded together a certain number of well-born young men and even older men who were willing to visit hospitals regularly, and above all to pay for, and even prepare, and even administer, good and proper food to the sick. Camillus did the same; and his spirit became more and more widely known. Religious Orders, accustomed to send their young men, especially novices, to visit hospitals, and the Jesuits in particular whose novices had always to spend a month in hospital service, began to choose San Giacomo, for Camillus's sake, as the place to which they should go, though Camillus, discreetly, used to distribute these ardent young ministrants also among other hospitals. Fr. Pescatore S.J., the novice-master of St. Aloysius, used simply to hand over his novices to the layman Camillus and allow them to stay at his hospital day and night and did not even visit them to see how they were getting on. "When they are in the hands of Signor Camillus", he said, "I put my faith in him, and remain at home. For I know him, and regard him as a man of holy life."

It is then not astonishing that Camillus, whose mind was now equally occupied with the idea of the religious life, and the idea of serving the sick, should have combined the two and begun to picture a Religious Order

devoted to the Service of the Sick. The best of present arrangements was too precarious, too haphazard. A specific training in both religious life and service of the sick, in view of a specific form of life, was essential. This idea came to its full blossoming, so to say, round about the feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1582. At once he communicated his idea to his special little band. No more did he pass the nights in prayer, and multiply his penances in solitude. These men would meet in a special room for prayer, and—what will upset our modern prejudices, for penance. They flogged themselves and fasted and wore hair-cloth. Now, after a while, in that secluded room, was to be found a certain Crucifix.

It may not have become clear, so far, that Camillus was animated not merely by pity for his fellow-men, nor even by some abstract idea of God and His services, but by an intimate and personal love for our Lord, Jesus Christ. Of course, no one who knows the history of the Church, and in particular that of the Middle Ages and indeed the Renaissance, would suppose that men, hitherto, had been *capable* of dissociating humanitarian work, or worship of God, from the Name, work and example, and appeal of Jesus Christ. In Camillus's case, that which does not require to be explicitly stated none the less reveals itself as it were by accident. When he left the Capuchins for the second time, he had already resolved to "follow his beloved Crucified at all times and in all places and in all adversities". And I might ask—How could any man, obsessed by the wish to be a Franciscan, have been other than continuously conscious of St. Francis, in whose very flesh the stigmata of the crucifixion appeared? When he re-entered San Giacomo, he resolved to "give himself in all and through all to the service of *Jesus Christ* crucified in His most living image, the Sick". It was friends who, to please him and his little

band, had a Crucifix carved—by an artist unknown to us—and this became, undoubtedly, a sort of magnetic centre of his life. It was two metres tall, including the Cross. The Christ is 90 centimetres. The original cross, being too small for the figure, and having become worm-eaten, was replaced in 1742 and again in 1930. The cross is absolutely simple: the figure, though renaissance, is exquisitely refined, tender, and dignified. The head reposes on the right shoulder. When I refer to St. Camillus's Crucifix, this is what I allude to.¹ In the presence of this Crucifix, five men, on the staff of the Hospital, promised to follow Camillus in life and death, in prosperity and in toil. Prosperity, I may say, was far distant.

Naturally this little group became known, talked about, and objected to. Biographers at first put down Camillus's difficulties to the act of a servant who, not having been asked to join the group, was angry and resolved to ruin it. He denounced Camillus as making a plot, as conspiring for some insubordination, as aiming at making himself sole head of San Giacomo, as allowing in consequence the sick themselves to suffer from inattention. We agree that some of those who had wished to become General Superintendents of the Hospital were jealous of Camillus. We admit that he was summoned to answer the charges made against him, and then was given no chance of explaining himself, but was told outright that he must disband his little group and get rid of his 'oratory' . . . as if there were not plenty of churches in Rome without his making a pretend-church in addition. But I am clear that there were those who really thought that Camillus was an ambitious revolutionary, aiming at a sort of dictatorship, though this becomes clearer later on. Meanwhile, on the pretext

¹ See M. Vanti: *Il Crocifisso di S. Camillo de Lellis*, a monograph issued in Rome, 1937. -

that he had not unfurnished his 'oratory' quickly enough his enemies had entered it, pulled down the Crucifix, and pushed it behind a door. Camillus was indignant. He decided to offer his resignation and to go elsewhere. He went to the "Do-Good-Brothers" (the society of St. John of God) and offered his services. My feeling is that neither because of his never-healing leg, nor yet because they feared to quarrel with San Giacomo, but because they felt sure that he had a vocation of his own, they refused him. Camillus thus found himself, after all his efforts, seemingly reduced to nothing, and understood that whatever he was to do in the future, must be God's work, not his.

He was, in a sense, when making such applications, still kicking against the pricks. On the very night when he found the Crucifix taken down he had transported it to his room and prayed long before it. He went to sleep and dreamed that it said to him: "Don't be afraid, O man of small soul: go ahead, for I will help you and be with you". He woke up, and told his disheartened associates, and they resumed their united prayers, no more in the dismantled oratory but in the hospital church, of which one of them was sacristan and held its keys. Thus when others went for walks or made their siesta, these men nourished their resolve in the presence of God.

Cicatelli places immediately after this dream a different yet to some degree similar vision, intended to encourage Camillus who was "suffering immensely" from "new and more tormenting difficulties", which drew from him "most bitter and painful lamentation". But it is impossible to see what events can thus be described until what we shall have to say about Camillus's relations with St. Philip. To my mind (and indeed to Fr. Vanti's, though he does not permit himself to change the date normally assumed for the second 'vision'), Cicatelli not unnaturally

remembered and wrote about the second vision because the first was fresh and present in his mind; and as for the 'difficulties', I expect Camillus could foresee from the outset that they would arise; and that they did in fact arise in a slow crescendo till they reached a climax, and the new divine encouragement was needed. I venture therefore to relate the second and psychologically more interesting experience when I think that it more probably occurred.

Though Camillus carried on with his work as Maestro with his usual exactness, it could not but be obvious that there was a party within San Giacomo that was hostile to him, though as we shall see the real authorities, even if they were to disapprove of his plans, remained personally his good friends. He asked himself if he could possibly stay there. He consulted a friend, who consulted his confessor, Fr. (afterwards Cardinal) Tarugi, and both agreed that Camillus would do well to leave, and thus be more free to gather round himself a devoted group of friends who, with him, could serve the sick and even the plague-stricken when necessary. The plan seemed good to him, but he waited. Gradually he came to feel that such a group of men, like himself, laymen, but with home ties of various sorts, would be inadequate for the really needed work. They must be, he felt, fully detached—in a word, men vowed to personal poverty and willing to provide a whole-time work without remuneration. And also, seeing that as laymen they could not do what was by far the more important part of that work—the spiritual part; the hearing of confessions; the instructions; above all, the administration of the Sacraments of the Sick and Dying—should not such men be priests? Should not he himself be ordained? ¹

¹The dismantling of the Oratory took place after Aug. 15, 1582. Mgr. A. Salviati was then guardian prelate. He became Cardinal somewhat later, and Mgr. Cusano succeeded him at San Giacomo on Dec. 28, 1583. We cannot therefore deny that the Oratory was dismantled by

Camillus had begun to improve his general education directly upon becoming Maestro. But now that he foresaw the priesthood, he realised that he must refresh especially his Latin. That he knew some is clear because he had been able to teach some of his friends the Little Office of our Lady: this was more significant than the Litany of Loreto which, we learn, he also said with them. The first instruction was given by a chaplain of the hospital, who died in June 1580. Another priest took on his Latin education, and Camillus was to be seen even in the streets, Latin Grammar in hand. After a while, he was able to go to the Roman College, which had been founded by St. Ignatius in 1551. When Camillus went there, very famous men were teaching there—Vasquez, Suarez, St. Robert Bellamine. But philosophy was not for Camillus, who was placed in the lowest class—this bearded man of 32 and over 6½ feet tall—among boys of 12 and 13. After all, St. Ignatius had done exactly the same thing: Ignatius too had been a soldier; Ignatius too had limped to the end of his life. Camillus could afford to smile at the gibes of little boys who kept saying that he had arrived late. But a Jesuit teacher there stopped them, and explained what great things Camillus was doing—what greater things he certainly would do in the Church of God. Besides this, he attended classes given in the house of Virgilio Crescenzi to the sons of that patrician. The Jesuit Fathers did all they could for him, and in 1583 he was judged fit to receive minor orders. True, the reforms of the Council of Trent, concerning ecclesiastical education, could not be put into operation at once, and it is startling to hear not only that in special cases examiners

Salviati's order or with his approval, for Camillus had already told him about his plan of leaving the hospital. Hence it is clear that his desire to leave was due, not to the dismantling, but to his inability to reform the place. The plan had indeed been maturing during the last two years of his stay there.

had to be contented by a test in the knowledge of that Council's Catechism, but that Camillus was examined about the Life of St. Nicholas of Myra, whom he loved because of his great charity and work during a plague. It remained that Camillus to the end said he had never studied theology and knew how to talk only about 'charity', and that he had to ask a lawyer who was reading out some deed in Latin to "put it in Italian, because I don't understand Latin any too well". But then, no normal man does or ever will understand legal documents; and, the Apostles were not so very learned, nor was St. Philip Neri, nor was St. Ignatius. Yet we are assured that they became good priests,

On the day when he went with his friend Francesco Profeta to San Giovanni in Laterano all jubilant to receive the tonsure, it was discovered that the 'dimissorial letters' received from Chieti, vouching for his suitability for the priesthood, lacked an essential clause. He had to return—yet he was not cast down. He assured his companion that God had let him know that the day would not close without the matter being put right. He went to the Hospital, prayed before a crucifix that stood in the middle of a ward, and immediately met an old friend of his from Chieti itself, who said that he could himself supply one of the two needed signatures and that he knew a priest in Rome who could supply the other. So the completed document was produced that night. He had already put on ecclesiastical dress on February 2, 1583, anniversary of his conversion; and he received the tonsure and then the rest of Minor Orders from Bishop Goldwell, the only surviving English Bishop of Mary Tudor's times, and Bishop of St. Asaph, and on three successive Sundays in the sacristy of San Silvestro in Monte Cavallo, a charming church of which half remains.

But a new anxiety beset him. Camillus had given all

the money he received as Maestro di Casa to the Hospital itself or to his teachers: but to be ordained, a priest had to be able to provide some evidence that he could support himself decently. Virgilio Crescenzi was trying to find him a 'benefice'; but the matter dragged. However, one December evening of 1583, Camillus met, in the courtyard of San Giacomo, a gentleman called Fermo Calvi. Though it was pouring with rain, they began to talk: Camillus found himself explaining his situation. Calvi promised to pray for him. But at home he thought he ought to provide Camillus with a patrimony himself. He returned, and promised him a gift of 500 scudi, which would amount to about £125 of our money, indeed, granting that money was then worth four times our own, a sum of £500. Camillus, enchanted, went to the proper official, only to be told that more was needed. Fermo added 100 scudi, sufficient to produce, it appears, 36 scudi a year, £9 (36) a year. Camillus was therefore ordained subdeacon and deacon during the Lent of 1584, and priest on May 26, the Saturday after Pentecost. He then made a fortnight's retreat, the details of which were known to none but St. Philip, who never divulged them. And at last, on June 10, 1584, he said his first Mass in the church of Our Lady Porta Paradisi, with a few of his special friends around him, and also Calvi, who gave him a chalice, a missal, three chasubles and other necessities for Mass. Camillus, on his side, gave Holy Communion to his generous benefactor. It is pleasant to recall that when Calvi grew old and lonely, Camillus assigned him three rooms in the Maddalena (of which below) and gave him affectionate hospitality till he died on August 16, 1612, assisted, in this last passage, by Camillus himself.

Despite their apprehensions that Camillus might still want to leave San Giacomo and perhaps in order to keep him there, the Guardians of the Hospital appointed

him chaplain of the little church called "la Madonnina dei Miracoli", which stood on the bank of the Tiber not far from the Piazza del Popolo. It had sheltered the first community of the Capuchins, founded by B. Matteo da Bascia (1529-1530) and contained a famous miraculous picture of Our Lady and the Holy Child. When Salviati built his great church for San Giacomo, he transported the picture thither: it is venerated in the second chapel to the right as you enter. A copy was placed in the Madonnina, which became famous in its turn, and was taken to the present church of Sta Maria dei Miracoli in the Piazza del Popolo itself when the old church was pulled down. It seems incredible that Camillus should continue, not only doing full time as Maestro, but also his studies, adding to this such work as was needed—perhaps not much—at his church. From his point of view, however, it was a first step out of the Hospital: and by asking two of his friends to stay with him in the tiny house he hired, he actually began to create his first Community. These two friends were Bernardino Norcino and Curzio Lodi. Bernardino entered the Hospital as servant on September 4, 1580, having done hard work previously as wood-man, and also as servant in the Roman College. He held various offices in the Hospital but left it finally in November 1584 to put himself entirely at the disposal of Camillus. He was a very simple and devout man, who won the highest opinions wherever he went and had been thought a mainstay of the Hospital. His spirit of prayer led him to great heights of holiness. Curzio Lodi came to Rome from Aquila and was a penitent of St. Philip's and indeed gave witness at the process of St. Philip's canonisation. It was Philip who sent the young man to San Giacomo as a servant, and in fact he replaced Bernardino when he ascended to the post of guardaroba. This was in 1582. It is interesting that Camillus, when he began his foundation,

asked Curzio for a little money he had brought to Rome with him and had deposited in the keeping of the Hospital. Curzio took counsel from St. Philip, who did not approve of this. However, Curzio's affection for Camillus won the day and he made the money—and himself—entirely over to the new enterprise. I mention this tiny incident to show—as we shall see much more clearly later on—that holy people do not always see eye to eye, and that holy 'directors' are not tyrants and do not *force* their penitents to take their advice.

After his ordination, Camillus asked leave for himself and Curzio to return for a while to their home-land, the Abruzzo. He resigned, meanwhile, his office of Maestro di Casa, and, while he was warned to make his leave as short as possible—it lasted in fact only about a fortnight—he fixed no definite end for it. However, he advised Bernardino to retain his post, but if possible to transfer himself to the Madonnina together with a third, the priest Francesco Profeta, from Catania. He had entered San Giacomo on July 17, 1582, and became sacristan and confessor to the Hospital. He in fact definitely joined Camillus early in March, 1585. Camillus's return to his home as priest naturally astounded those who remembered only his earlier reputation, and still more the fact that having found he possessed, after all, some small property there, he sold it, and gave the proceeds to the poor.

On August 1st they were back in Rome and went straight to the Madonnina where they were soon joined by Bernardino: Profeta was however involved in a lawsuit and could not come yet. Here on September 15th, Octave of the Nativity of Our Lady, Camillus gave the "clerical dress", i.e. a short cassock reaching the knees and a black cloak, to his two friends, and, at the foot of Our Lady's altar, their Institute was born.

Fr. Vanti rightly lays emphasis both on the annoyance

that Camillus's plan occasioned within the Hospital, and also, upon the extreme fairness of those authorities (if not of all their subordinates) towards him. Mgr. Salviati, when he first heard of Camillus's aspirations, disapproved of them not only because of the prospective loss to the Hospital, but because he thought Camillus impetuous and hot-headed. Afterwards, not only did Camillus obtain him for the Cardinal Protector of the new Congregation, but the Cardinal himself declared openly that it was the work of God. Mgr. Cusano succeeded Salviati in 1583 and strenuously opposed any idea of Camillus's that might involve his leaving San Giacomo, precisely because he esteemed him and Bernardino so highly. Later on, he said to Camillus: "Do you remember how often I tried to prevent your attending to that absurd society of yours? Somehow God has disposed and changed these things!" And we could quote many other witnesses, from Guardians, lower officials, doctors and surgeons to the enormously high opinion in which they held Camillus. The testimony of servants has its particular interest and pathos, and of infirmarians who were begged by Camillus to let him dress his own leg—the sick needed them more than he did. Yet in a sense these witnesses repeat themselves: save in the one case of the angry servant (p. 33), I can find no more than vague statements about a kind of 'party', which made things uncomfortable for Camillus, and this was very natural: he in his way made things uncomfortable for them, simply by insisting that work must be done properly, and with charity, and because a superb example of disinterestedness is always exasperating to those especially who seek little else but their self-interest. True, the authorities were distressed at the thought of his leaving San Giacomo, and even disbelieved in his projects—how could a man, "*idiotia e senza lettere*", as we often

hear—an unlettered man of no standing—hope to found and control a new religious society of so exacting a sort, especially when the whole idea of new foundations was seen with grave disfavour by the Holy See ?

I will mention two incidents only that belong to this period, to show what an impression Camillus made on his contemporaries. A man lay in the Hospital whose leg was to be amputated next day. The instruments were all prepared and under his bed. Camillus sat with him that night, and talked to him till he went quietly to sleep. Next day the leg was perfectly well. 35 years afterwards, a man who saw Camillus in the street, began to call out: "Viva il padre Camillo !" "What is the matter, brother ?" said Camillus. "Don't you remember, father, the grace that I received from God through you ? You cured my broken leg by means of prayer when I could find no remedy." Camillus told him to keep quiet: it was God who had cured him. The man cried out that if he lived to be 100 he would always call out "Viva padre Camillo !" Camillus turned to Fr. Gens, who related the episode, and said: "It was 35 years ago that it happened and he still remembers it !"

The other episode throws light on the times. Late on April 26, 1583, the Chief of Police, Gian Battista della Pace, entered the palace of Lodovico Orsini who, despite the severe orders of Gregory XIII, gave shelter to bandits there. The Orsini insisted that in their house they were privileged. There was a fight, and three nobles were killed, one of them Lodovico's brother. The Orsini vowed vengeance, and so did the people, who worshipped the family that protected their lawlessness. It was feared that the horrors of the Sack of Rome would repeat themselves. The Chief of Police fled: so did his men. Two of them rushed to San Giacomo and begged Camillus to hide them, which he did. The mob demanded, waving

bloody swords, that they be handed over to them. Camillus implored them to have mercy on men who had fled to the House of God and of Mercy. They refused. Camillus withdrew to the church and prayed. When he felt sure he had been heard, he came out, and offered himself in exchange for the two soldiers. The mob was instantly quelled and went away quietly.

Camillus had managed to extricate himself definitely from his charge of Maestro: Curzio felt no obligation to return to the Hospital: Bernardino had removed to the Madonnina, though we do not know what reasons he alleged. Naturally Mgr. Cusano felt all this acutely, and possibly in the hopes that he might persuade Camillus to return did not deprive him of the chaplaincy of the little church. But Camillus did what could hardly have failed to convince Cusano that his hopes were futile. He went to his old room, and took away the Crucifix. He carried it, bareheaded at noonday, through the streets to the Madonnina. People knelt, wept, and called their friends to the windows. And he solemnly installed it in his new dwelling.

But the climax was, that Camillus declared that he and his companions would now work at Santo Spirito, another great hospital that we must describe in a moment. Camillus had seen quite clearly that matters would be awkward if the three companions, intending to attract yet more, tried to remain at San Giacomo where already that kind of kingdom within a kingdom had been attempted (though in a far vaguer way) and had been forbidden and dissolved. But had he already been negotiating with Santo Spirito? There is no record of it that I know of: but how could he guess that he would be welcome there? One might almost have expected that the authorities would have declined to welcome men whose very presence might give grounds for ill feeling between them and those

of San Giacomo. Be that as it may, Camillus's intention reached the ears of Mgr. Cusano. He was genuinely furious. What criticism of San Giacomo was not implied by all these men wishing to leave it? Of what intrigue had not Camillus been guilty, not only by not making it clear long before what he intended to do, but by taking away with him the very best men of the staff? Cusano in fact attacked Camillus, one day, in the hospital courtyard, in the presence of several others, and called him a revolutionary, and accused him of very great harm to the whole work being done for the sick. For my part, I think that Camillus had not wished to say anything definite till his own mind was perfectly clear about what he intended to do; I think that this accurate vision of the future and consequent fixation of plans came gradually. That he was to form a society of priests and others devoted to the exclusive care of the sick, had long been clear to him: but exactly when, and where—no. I think he felt it would be better to state only what he knew for certain, and when he knew it, and then to do it outright. This is the opposite of Newman's method, judging by the famous incident of the "grey trousers" which, with no word spoken, were meant to indicate to his visitor that he was renouncing the Anglican ministry. *If* Camillus did 'hint' at what he knew for certain, I think that this was just as contrary to his disposition as it was in harmony with Newman's, and that his hints were never due to an instinct (Italian or otherwise) for intrigue, but quite possibly to a real fear of provoking the explosion that now had come.

Yet this was not the worst. Cusano went to Philip Neri and implored him to use his authority to prevent Camillus from leaving his post at San Giacomo and taking Cusano's best men with him. Philip said that he always had tried to dissuade Camillus from founding what

Cusano called this grotesque Society, and that he knew nothing of these last steps of Camillus's. He said he would do his utmost to persuade the men to go back. Soon after this, Camillus arrived, terribly depressed by the attack of Cusano, and hoping for some word of comfort from the Saint, who, after all, realised fully what the service of the sick implied since he sent his own men to hospitals. Philip might have retorted that he always forbade them, precisely, to make any sort of *society*, or in any way to mix themselves up with the government of hospitals. Camillus might have answered that that did not touch the essential question, which was, whether or no such a society were *needed*? The proper work could not be done—still less could the desperately needed reforms be carried through—by precarious visits, however charitable. As it was, Philip simply told him to go back. Camillus was on the rack. He kept hearing an interior voice bidding him to go forward; and here was the one voice which he trusted in the world of men telling him to go back. He implored the Saint not to be astonished at what he had done, because he felt himself *violently* moved interiorly to do something more than look after *himself*. Philip then took the drastic measure of refusing to hear Camillus's confessions any more, or to direct him. "Go", said he, "to Fr. Talpa." And the same was to hold good for Curzio and Bernardino. Talpa was a man whom Philip called his "right arm"; he was exceptionally prudent, very zealous, an admirable spiritual director, and highly esteemed by St. Charles Borromeo and Cardinal Baronius.

All the same, the blow was terrific. Writers struggle to find reasons why St. Philip administered it. Philip wanted to test Camillus's humility: to mortify him: to check any exaggerated affection for himself or trust in him that Camillus might have: to resign his care for Camillus to a

man whom he judged still wiser than he himself was. I think that all this is perhaps far-fetched. Surely St. Philip honestly thought that Camillus was not the man to found a new society; that he was doing what all acknowledged to be a very good work where he was and that it was perverse to destroy it for the sake of an undeveloped plan of disputable value, and that Cusano was really being treated badly. We will not say that Philip felt piqued by Camillus's professing to be directed by him and then going flatly contrary to his direction, but that he considered that it was not much good his continuing to give him advice if it was obstinately disregarded over a considerable space of time, in a matter which concerned not only the whole career of this young man, but charity if not sheer justice in regard of others. Let someone else try what he can do with him. And after all, St. Philip may have thought, I *may* be wrong. Fr. Talpa is very prudent and I am—rather eccentric.

I deliberately wrote that last word. Before I protect myself for doing so, perhaps we might remember that neither Philip nor Camillus had yet reached that full perfection to which God was calling them. Philip had nearly ten more years to live, and Camillus thirty; much was to happen during that time, and we cannot possibly be saying anything against the achieved sanctity of either if we suppose that Philip *may* have felt a little irritated by the obstinate resistance of his penitent, especially as in the end he had given his 'advice in the shape of an order': or if we suppose that Camillus might have told both Philip and Cusano more exactly what he had, in the long run, become clear he was going to do. Hence, given human ways of thinking and feeling, we can say that both were almost wholly right, and each, perhaps, not perfectly so. From Philip's point of view, Camillus was genuinely making a serious mistake and being obstinate about it:

Camillus was sure he was doing right, and kept rather more quiet about the final steps than he need have done—for instance, he did not make it *clear* to Cusano that he and Bernardino and Curzio, at anyrate, were not coming back, and that probably Profeta would soon be leaving. And Cusano was most forgivably distressed at losing four of his best men at once, without even having been clearly warned that he was doing so nor having been clear that he must at once seek substitutes. He was wrong in getting so angry publicly, but an Italian, in such circumstances, may well be absolved if he expresses himself with volubility if not violence ! There is here all the material for a first rate three cornered tragedy—the clash between three very good men all of them very nearly quite right, and unable to see how they *could* be wrong ! And one cannot deny that St. Philip was at times startling—eccentric ! he did not move at all in the curves that might be expected of the ordinary man.

I can then quite imagine that he realised how delicate was the case of Camillus, and that it might be wise to hand him over to a man supremely known as ‘prudent’. Nor at that time, was the office of confessor sharply distinguished from that of director as it usually is now. Anyhow, he will have felt that if Camillus was bent on defying his direction in a way which Philip thought *wrong*, Camillus had better seek not only another director but another confessor.

The blow remained terrific. All these men were accustomed to regard Philip as the very anchorage on earth of their spiritual lives. Never to have approached him was one thing: to have been accepted and then rejected, that surely was another ! With Fr. Vanti, I am much inclined to think that this is when Camillus had his second preternatural communication connected with his Crucifix. The former one had been explicitly a dream; this time he was

awake, and saw the Figure detach its arms from the cross and reach them lovingly out towards him. And the divine voice said to him, almost as before: "Why distress yourself, a man of little soul? Go on with your enterprise, for I will help you, seeing that this work is Mine, not yours".¹

¹ Those who have always lived in a Catholic atmosphere and tradition will probably accept this narrative without much reflection, as they do most of such phenomena in the lives of Saints. Others will probably at once regard it as a hallucination. However, even the Italian *Vita* feels that some comment should be made upon it. It is, of course, mere *a priori* dogmatism to say that no such experience *can* be supernatural in origin. For our part, considering the event independently, we are forced to say that Camillus seems the least likely of men to have hallucinations. He was a man of extremely well-balanced brain—'an iron-clad head'; Salviati used to call him. Visions and the like play little or no part in his history: he perfectly well distinguished between his previous experience, which was a dream, and this one. His resistance to adversity was amazing: the amount of work he did despite really dreadful physical pain was no less astounding. It is interesting, too, that Camillus immediately told his friends about his dream, but not about this vision—not even to his close friend, Philip Biazzi (though he, in time, heard about it from others). Cicatelli, in his first edition (1615) does not mention it, for it was then, in fact, not known. But three men, worthy of belief because of their holiness of life, swore in their 'depositions' (in 1622, 1625, and 1626) that the Saint had yielded to the earnest request of the Flemish Fr. Gens to be told of the origin of the new Institute, and that he then related his experience to them, binding them to strict secrecy: after his death, this promise no more held good. We cannot of course give the adhesion of faith to this or to any ecclesiastical miracle, for these form no part of revelation. Nor need we even fear to ask what may have been its 'mechanism', so to say. Fr. Dalla Giacomo rightly says in *Domesticum*, July 1922, p. 146, that 'the Author of physical nature has infinite numbers of possible ways of modifying and transforming it'. I see no quite insuperable difficulties in the way of a wooden or plaster figure being made to move, become *apparently* animated, and speak. It may be sophistication on my part to feel that aesthetically I should not like that—if only because in this case the crucifix was much smaller than Camillus. Nor can we say that God might not have acted directly on Camillus's physical organs of sight and hearing so that he *thought* he saw and heard what really he did not. But would this not be perilously near to creating an illusion in him? But I should find no difficulty in God's having acted directly on his mind, and made him so vividly conscious of our Lord's love and care for him and of the certainty that his vocation was of divine origin and not due to himself—"You did not choose Me—I chose *you*"—that the direct, intimate, spiritual consciousness overflowed upon his imagination and senses, which is in inverse of the ordinary process in which a sense-experience precedes the idea which the mind forms by means of it. The same problem arises when the Saints 'see' other Saints,

Any how, it is good to know that Camillus loved and honoured and sought counsel from Philip so long as the latter lived, and Philip never lessened in the slightest his affection and esteem for Camillus: as for Camillus's spiritual sons, they charmingly spoke of Philip as their 'holy Grandpapa'—for had he not been 'Father in the Lord' to their Founder?

III

Camillus and his little band now transferred their activities, as they had proposed, to the Hospital of Santo Spirito. A note on its history may be permitted.

Ina, king of the Anglo-Saxons, had instituted an asylum for English pilgrims on the right bank of the Tiber between—to make its position easily understood—the Castle of St. Angelo and St. Peter's. The quarter therefore took the name of 'Sassia', and the hospital when confided to Guy de Montpelier and his Brothers of the Holy Ghost was called Santo Spirito in Sassia. It was Innocent III, that mighty promoter of hospital-work throughout Europe, who actually summoned Guy to Rome to supervise what was to be the ideal world-hospital—*Hospitium Apostolicum* or simply *Nostrum*, as it was so called, and, since laymen and not only religious were to share in the good work there, instituted a Confraternity of the Holy Ghost in the same year. This Hospital did indeed reproduce itself throughout Europe.

or Angels (for all these are discarnate). It is interesting that St Bernadette, at Lourdes, felt that she saw Our Lady 'with her eyes', but heard her voice 'here', in her 'heart'.—The option is this—Did Camillus's experience have its origin outside himself, i.e. from God? or did it arise wholly from some psychological disturbance within himself? Given his character, his vocation, and the Church's seal set upon his sanctity, I have no doubt that God, in a way known to Himself and never ascertainable by us, initiated a process in the Saint which set the *whole* of his body-soul personality 'in movement', so to say, so that he saw, heard, felt, thought, and *knew* in exactly the way which he needed and profited by at the time.

Earlier buildings having been burnt down, the actual edifice was constructed by order of Sixtus IV in 1471. It is extremely dignified, and is grouped around a central hall. In the middle the roof rises into an octagon turret or quasicupola, under which is the main altar of the hospital.

The fewness of the Santo Spirito religious made it difficult to find a superior with all the requisite qualities from amongst them, though Innocent III had wished that they should rule it for ever. Popes tried various experiments as the centuries passed: finally they resigned themselves to appointing the men they thought most fit to govern it. It seems to me necessary, if we are to see Camillus as an *organic* part of its history, very briefly to outline the career of his great predecessor in the reform of Santo Spirito—Bernardino Cirillo (see once more M. Vanti—*Un humanista del Cinquecento in funzione di riformatore*: Rome, 1936). He was born in May, 1500: both his parents died before he was twenty: the first part of his life was distracted by his desperate attempt to pursue his studies, and to assist his family. Ordained in 1526, he was granted various small ecclesiastical posts. A brilliant lawyer, civil and canonical, he was called to many high offices by no means to his taste. In 1556 he was appointed Canon of Sta Maria Maggiore and almost at once became head of Santo Spirito. The real point of his life is that he was a true humanist—he was steeped from youth up in Plato and the Neo-Platonists (even Iamblichus), in the Aeropagite, Pica della Mirandola and the rest, and he had Marsilio Ficino for tutor—and yet was no neo-pagan. He really did believe that the new birth of ‘letters’ and the arts could render immense services to the Church and to religion, as indeed they might have, had they not been so grievously mis-used.

In 1556 Paul IV appointed a prelate as governor who

at once fell sick. But his predecessor died and Cirillo became temporary Governor. He hated his task. It was impossible to live there, he said, without oneself falling sick: the eye sees nothing but the wounded and the vision of death; the ear hears nothing but cries and groans, and nostrils and even taste are horribly assaulted. However, in October, 1556, the Pope definitely appointed him Governor, and with true obedience he devoted himself wholly to his work. He was therefore in the curious position of controlling not only the establishment, with its vast properties and revenues, but a congregation of religious to which he did not belong. This apart from the violent rivalries which surround the Apostolic See, was enough to ensure his future being storm-tossed. Paul IV was himself a tempestuous man: and when he died, Pius IV (1559) began to receive endless criticisms of Cirillo, all based really on his having been too friendly with the Caraffa, so dear to the previous Pope. He refuted these without much difficulty. It may, however, have been his close friendship with St. Charles Borromeo which saved him from being dismissed. Meanwhile his influence was great also outside the Hospital, and his advice was welcomed at Trent, whose Council resumed and completed its work during that Pontificate. In 1565 the Dominican Pius V, the very day after his election, summoned Cirillo back to high office in the papal court, and while himself so austere, enjoyed the open and genial talk of Cirillo who also effected great economies in the Vatican. But this position was lost when Gregory XIII came to the throne (1572), and Cirillo spent practically the rest of his life defending his financial, moral and spiritual governorship of the Hospital.

His duties had been enormous. On arrival, he spent three months disentangling the situation. He felt he must first put order into its finances, even to satisfy justice, let alone

efficiency. The properties possessed by Santo Spirito had been enormous: but those, for example, near the sea and in theory most prosperous, were exposed to piracy and pillage: whole areas were reduced to sterility by ignorance and indolence; maladministration, speculation and fraud had reduced the Hospital to a fearful state of debt. The labyrinthine accounts of all this can still be studied. Indeed, he had first to get the accounts properly drawn up, and every source of income examined. The practice of granting indulgences with the duty of giving alms to the hospital annexed, had, in this case too, given rise to such pestilent abuses that Cirillo, seeing that he could not rectify them, boldly got Pius V to suppress all such indulgences, though, of course, he had to make good the lost income himself.

The inhabitants of the Hospital were, naturally, the patients and the staff. The former consisted of (i) the sick: (ii) infants cast away by the destitute at birth, in reliance that some establishment such as this would rescue them: and (iii) girls who had grown up there, and were to be educated and taught simple work, till they could be married off. The children had a sort of nursery school of their own. Not all patients stayed very long—they might be suffering from wounds, or fevers, especially in summer, like malaria. Many who should have come, did not, feeling hospital to be a disgrace: or others came out of laziness: others, because destitute. In 1549–1550, 10,000 sick were cared for, of whom (incredible as it sounds) 9,028 died, either because they came too late, or because resistance had been exhausted by malnutrition if not starvation, but also, alas, to the forgivable shortcomings of science, and to the disgraceful inadequacy of the nursing and even medical equipment. The staff consisted of religious, male and female; doctors and their assistants, and various sorts of servants. Idle to give

statistics: enough, that when Cirillo arrived, none of these groups sufficed even numerically to do their work properly. On paper the organisation was excellent—kitchens, laundry, bakery, pharmacy etc. etc., had but the human element been adequate. Cirillo had to reform all this in detail, and provide much more with much less income: he succeeded at least materially—diet, linen, woollens ended by being excellent: medicines were as copious as they were curious; the barber had no rest day or night, nay, nor on Sundays, so occupied was he with blood-letting. And Paul IV appointed a notary for the Hospital and ruled that all local legal cases, matrimonial, spiritual, criminal, should be dealt with inside the Hospital, lest the inmates should suffer from their seclusion.

Cirillo had to turn next to the actual edifice. Admirable drawings show us both the outside and the inside of the Hospital (1577, 1585 etc.), and the vast ward of St. Sisto with its 300 beds. Cirillo was indeed fiercely criticised by men who spent fortunes on their private palaces, for building too 'sumptuously'. Anyhow, build he had to, and he built in the *best* tradition of his time, and in a way that he thought proper to the 'perfect hospital' and to the Holy See which wished it to be a model. The church had indeed begun to be rebuilt from the foundations in 1538: Cirillo completed its 'decoration'. Its lovely little campanile was restored, its three bells re-cast and a fourth added, Paul IV authorising Cirillo to use cannon for this. Pius IV stopped further building in connection with Santo Spirito and even St. Peter's. But Cirillo, observing that the whole place was ruinous and that the kitchen had collapsed, 'without so much as asking the Governor for permission', got leave from St. Pius V to begin again. The Pope gave him for architect Giovanni Lippi (Nanni Bigio), sadly famous for having succeeded (for some time) in getting himself substituted for Michel-

angelo in the building of St. Peter's. Cirillo took him up the campanile and explained to him his comprehensive plan which included the preservation of the old buildings of Sixtus IV. No vandal he ! Work then began with the the house for the older girls: then came the hospital itself and the palazzo of the Governor, which was what earned him the sharpest criticisms. He did not live to see his work completed: but we cannot rebuke its far-sightedness, its width of outlook, its combination of sense of actual requisites with respect for the past. The true Humanist !

But all this was as nothing to his *moral* responsibility. He began by restoring public worship in the church to some sort of dignity: even so, it remained erratic. The condition of the orphan girls had sunk to a deplorably low level. He at least raised it much. Worst was the degradation of the Order of the Holy Ghost. Even had it wished to, it could not have done its work properly, so had it shrunk. It had quite lost the religious spirit, and languished till, after endless efforts to reform it, it had to be suppressed by Pius IX in 1847. But Cirillo had at least succeeded in getting subordinates appointed such as he could esteem as they esteemed him. St. Philip and the Jesuits welcomed his reforms. The record of the Apostolic Visitation of 1574 goes into every detail, yet its adverse criticisms are very few. The appalling thing is to compare it with that of 1585. For lack of space I cannot even summarise it. *All* is condemned—the disgraceful condition of the church and of worship; the condition of the sick, beds, doctoring, spiritual assistance even of the dying; the luxury of the Santo Spirito Prior and the futility of the rest of the Order; the perfectly appalling death-rate of infants (out of 3,503, 2,672 had died); the deplorable character of the far too few wet-nurses—and above all the degradation

of the official 'Brothers', nearly all of whom observe none of their vows, but "are scandalous and incontinent".

Was then Mgr. Cirillo a purely personal and not a creative force? Perhaps. Or, more truly, he laid foundations on which others, like Camillus, could build. True, we may discount his sarcastic and most amusing letters *about* the Hospital; but we see that in letters to *persons* he really does try to persuade, not to intimidate. It has been said that his friendly but rather caustic laughter did less to heal than St. Philip's gentle, gay yet very firm-lipped, smile. Well, so long as he lived, we find few of the disorders that existed before and after him, and that is much. He was never jealous. He begged St. Philip and his men to undertake the 'reform' of the Hospital. The Saint refused. The significant change was to be due to St. Camillus, who arrived, a new man, in Rome, the year when Cirillo died. The first thing to see is that Cirillo could not possibly have lived a *continuous* life through the contradictory reigns of Paul IV, Pius IV, St. Pius V, and especially Gregory XIII, and that Camillus did not enter on a field of action where nothing yet had been done. Our Lord Himself did not appear without having had His Baptist; and it is instructive to see how many Saints (St. Francis Xavier: St. Peter Claver: St. Vincent de Paul . . .) had had their forerunners. Cirillo died, almost blind, and most worthily of his honourable, high-hearted and self-sacrificing career, on June 19, 1575.

Life, however, at the Madonnina proved impossible. The room (about 14 ft. beneath the actual street-level) was on the Tiber and constantly full of mist. Camillus and Curzio fell gravely ill: work had been too heavy; food, too scanty; sleep, too short. Curzio was taken to the hospital of San Giovanni, where the Prior gave him his own room. Camillus was taken back to San Giacomo, and was given his old room where he lived as Maestro di

Casa. Did they think that his enterprise had proved itself impossible, and that he had returned to remain for good? Anyhow, the moment he was better, he returned to work at Santo Spirito, but decided he must find new lodgings. He found a house in the Via delle Botteghe Oscure, so-called because the dark vaults of the shops were those of an ancient theatre. This street lies behind the little church of St. Stanislaus, in the tiny 'piazzetta' half-way down the Via dei Polacchi going from the piazza Morgana to the Via delle Botteghe Oscure. Unluckily the rent was 50 scudi a year, and half had to be paid in advance. Camillus possessed not even that half. He prayed, and then, with his naïve aplomb, on meeting an acquaintance, Pompeo Baratelli, told him his plans. Baratelli put his hand in his pocket and presented Camillus with 30 scudi on the spot. On the first of January 1585 the three companions took up their abode in the new house. They hoped now to increase their numbers. One applicant had been received at the Madonnina, but had left, appalled at the hardness of the life. Even at Santo Spirito it was terribly hard. Camillus wished that he and his friends should take up all the hardest tasks: if the servants found patients too disgusting to be treated by them, the phrase was current: "Let us leave this muck to Camillus": and it was here that some time later he found the living man in the room into which the dead were 'tossed'. None the less, men began to join him, though not for some time could they reach a round dozen.

But they began to get known. Baratelli promised them all the bread they should need: bequests and other gifts began to reach them. They found themselves called to private houses, where the danger of men dying unattended was so great. The new house was so close to the Gesù that Camillus asked St. Philip if his companions and he might not choose confessors from among the Jesuits:

Philip approved; the new director was Fr. Ottaviano Capelli, who facilitated the Camillan priests' saying Mass in the Gesù, the others going there for the Sacraments or sermons. If the weather was very bad, or time too short for even that small journey, they went to one or the other of two nearer churches. The first sorrow was the death of Bernardino Norcino, that well-loved, most simple and most spiritual of the earliest Three. He had foretold the purchase of the Mother House and Church of St. Mary Magdalen, and also, had assured Rodolfo Aquaviva, S.J., that he would die a martyr, as indeed he did. He was buried in the Jesuit vault in the Gesù, having died on Aug. 16, 1585. Curzio Lodi too became so ill that he had to go home for two years to recover.

But already Camillus wished to give a name and firmer shape to his little Company. It was popularly known at first as the Company of Camillus: but his modesty revolted against that. For a brief while, it was called the 'Servants of the Sick', a name used in the rule: but at the end of April 1585 the title 'Ministers of the Sick' was settled on, because other groups were using the word 'Servants', or because Camillus liked to adopt outright the word 'minister' so familiar from the Latin of the Vulgate. We, however, cannot but find it easier to use, in English, the word 'servant'. This expression: 'Ministri degli Infermi' lent itself to pleasantries . . . children ran after them calling out: 'Ministri dell' Inferno!'—the earliest MS. life delightfully says that this was undoubtedly due to the Devil, who—proud spirit!—could not bear that men called by so base a name should win such triumphs over him, and tried to make them abhorred so that they should not be called to the dying. As a matter of fact, they became named, in many parts of Italy, the Fathers of the Good Death, or of Beautiful Death; so too in Spain and South America. In Sicily it became proverbial

that you could not die without the help of a Crucifer, or Cross-carrier as they were there called: indeed, so earnest was the help of these men at the bedside of the dying, that Sicily even created a proverb: if a petitioner was too pressing, they said: "You are as insistent as a Crucifer at a death-bed!"

The fact that the little Company received its name of 'Ministers' as early as April-May 1585 suggests that the 'Rule', which still has that of 'servants' at its head was written before that, and maybe had been begun before Camillus even left San Giacomo. He did not write fast; he could not write much at a time; he certainly prayed long before composing so much as a paragraph. The original text of the "Rules of the Company of the Servants of the Sick" was lost, and recovered quite recently in the Secret Archives of the Vatican. It falls into two parts, not accurately separated, and indeed the rules, though numbered, as it were melt into one another. At first, Camillus speaks of the formation of the interior life of the 'Servants'; then, of the character their work must have. This rule, to my mind, expresses Camillus's character very well. It is unlike any other such document though you can see how carefully he had studied the Jesuit rules (it is said that possibly he had read about the society created by Bernardino de Obregon formed in Spain in 1522: it spread rapidly but never was papally approved. It is thought too that he inherited one or two phrases from the Rule of the Religious of the Holy Spirit). One inspiration pervades this collection of rules—Charity: but *real* charity, that loves men because it sees Christ in them: and one object is aimed at throughout—the service of the sick; all sick people, at all times and in every place.

In consequence of this ideal, a very wide liberty is left to the conscience of each. Thus if the needs of some sick man require it, a Brother may omit even Mass on days of

non-obligation: when they eat at home, there is a certain amount of fasting and abstinence; but if they are serving in a hospital, they must eat what is put before them: they must eat and pray together *when possible*. These ideas are to be found, for example, in rules 8, 9, 10. Another point on which Camillus insisted even more strongly than the almost dangerously broad subordination of the external 'religious' life to the needs of the sick was poverty. We need not look for an explanation to his early love for the Capuchin spirit (not that he ever lost it); the Jesuit rules were just as emphatic. St. Ignatius would have wished his religious to have done the whole of their work, teaching included, gratis: and he was obstinate that they should receive no ecclesiastical honours unless directly ordered to by the Pope, and should, so far as possible, keep out of all financial affairs so far as could possibly be managed. The real reason for this was the historical fact that prelacies were ambitiously sought for the sake of their revenues, and rich prelates risked turning simply into grand princes. The history of the Hospitaller Orders in particular gave a terrible example of what happened when such Orders grew rich. Again and again their houses became exempted from episcopal control, and the superiors of such Orders found themselves receiving vast legacies, controlling enormous estates—all lavished on them by benefactors really anxious to assist the work for which the Order had been founded. The temptation to increase such wealth and to live luxuriously was too much for human weakness. The headship of the Santo Spirito Hospital, for example, became so overwhelmingly desirable a post that hardly a bishopric was more valuable. The 'Commendatore' of that hospital had actually power of life and death within his vast territories: meanwhile the actual work among the sick was handed over to paid servants with the results that we have seen. After a

reform in 1371 its religious began to follow the Rule of St. Augustine and were able to accept all sorts of benefices—provided they were at least in minor orders. Therefore many received these, but went no further, drawing revenues, that is, but incurring no responsibilities. When the Holy See again and again tried to bring them back to the observance of their vow of poverty, they appealed to some “immemorial dispensation” which freed them from it. Pius IX had to suppress them altogether in 1847. Other such decaying Orders had of course been suppressed before. This preoccupation about poverty runs over into the second group of Rules (27–51: especially 28, 44 and 45); Camillus insists even more strongly than St. Ignatius that financial or other material obligations are completely forbidden to the Brothers: and that if in spite of everything bequests are made, they are to be given to the hospital in which the legator dies. And (34) he is determined that his men shall not appear to be reformers and critics in the hospitals where they serve; and wished them not to notice the defects of management they might notice—any reform that comes about must be the fruit of their unbounded charity.

I do not remember that any other rule for men speaks of charity as ‘maternal’—‘fatherly’, of course, often. But Camillus wishes the Brothers to ask for ‘motherly love’ every day, and to nurse the sick as a mother might nurse her only child who was ill; and Sixtus V in fact incorporated that word into his approbations. He enters into details—how they must help the sick to eat, holding their heads up, encouraging them; how they were to lift the patients gently without shaking them: and how they must study each case, and be present when the doctor visits each, and have periodical conferences concerning the needs of the sick, and learn how to make beds and cleanse the patients if they are in danger or too weak to

sit up, and to hand in a daily accurate account of the patient's day to the doctors. In the last rule, he foresees that others may have to be written if the Holy See sanctions the development of the Company into an official 'Congregation'. It was to do so: but in 1613 a completely new set of rules was sanctioned and introduced into the great hospital of Milan where on Feb. 13, 1595 Camillus had been able to install his own Religious instead of the paid staff. He hoped that these rules would serve for other hospitals too, and indeed they did, in proportion as he introduced his Religious into Naples, Florence, Genoa, Ferrara and Viterbo, besides Milan. These second rules, composed after eighteen years of experience, seem to me much less naïve than the former: they, retain, however a certain charm which I feel as definitely 'Camillan' as I feel the 'Franciscan' spirit and fragrance to be something quite unique and recognisable.

It can be justifiably said that Camillus, without troubling his head about historical precedents, really did initiate a *reform* within the Catholic Church in what concerned the service of the sick. Without doubt the earlier, medieval orders and hospitals had begun very well. But, as we saw, they had deteriorated till they reached a depth below which nothing sank more low save the incredible degradation of eighteenth and early nineteenth hospitals and nursing. Camillus gradually withdrew as many hospitals as he could from the old bad form of government. He infused a spirit of charity, nay, of holiness, into the ministrations of his spiritual sons and descendants which lifted that service into quite a new sphere of value spiritual and bodily. He *trained* his children both in their conscience towards God and their conscience towards their fellow-men, and also, by observation and experiment, their intelligence. And in a true sense he anticipated the modern recognition of the inseparability of mind and

body, so that the cure of either should go far towards the cure of both—but if the mind be disregarded, the cure of the body becomes infinitely more precarious. Only, herein, if he was anticipating this modern recognition, he was only applying the practice of Christ, and the immemorial Catholic doctrine of the union of spirit and flesh in one person.

Gregory XIII, mild almost to weakness-point, died on April 10, 1585. A stronger Pontiff was demanded, and most assuredly granted in the person of Sixtus V. Sixtus, who had started life by keeping pigs, and became a Franciscan, ended by a brief reign of five years on the loftiest throne of the world. His volcanic yet always righteous energy transformed the city of Rome—hope that the cupola of St. Peter's could ever be finished was quite abandoned: Sixtus, in two years, set it completed on the desolate drum—and regenerated the organisation of the Church itself. Camillus thought he had better obtain the sanction of this Pope for his Company. This must be sought through some Cardinal. He knew none. As usual, he prayed, and then waited to 'meet' one. One day, he descried in the courtyard of a palace Cardinal Lauro (best known from his episcopal see as Mondovi). He humbly, yet serenely and with perfect aplomb approached him, and told him what he wanted. The Cardinal listened, surprised, amused, then deeply impressed. He, who might well have become later on Pope himself, went to Sixtus who was pleased and referred the matter duly to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.¹ Moreover, he showed him a copy of the rules which he 'happened' to have on him. Some members of the board were reluctant to approve: new religious congregations

¹ This Congregation discussed all such subjects as might lead to a clash between religious orders and the Ordinary of the place where they might be.

were undesirable. Mondovi, however, appeared in person: opposition disappeared: on March 18, 1586, Sixtus issued a brief containing many 'tacit quotations' from Camillus's rule, and approving the Company which was to work always with the approval of ecclesiastical authority, without vows (though of course anyone was free to take *private* ones), and to have the right to ask for alms wherever he wished, without further local permission.

On April 20, Camillus assembled his little band who at once elected him Superior. The election was obvious, especially as few of them were priests. It has been well said that this merely meant for him being more than ever the servant of them all: and at once he went out with another priest to beg—collecting one loaf and some crusts, and 'many insults'. But the preceding events had interested the great officials of the Church in Camillus and Sixtus wanted to see him. Camillus was taken to the Vatican and the Pope studied him intently. Sixtus assuredly, as Napoleon professed to, "*se connaissait en hommes*"—could sum up men. He saw a very strong man who had been strong enough to obtain mastery of *himself*.¹ He then said he would in all ways befriend him. Camillus next, with his irrepressible simplicity, asked the Pope for leave for his Religious to wear a 'red' cross on the right side of their cassock and cloak, to distinguish them from all other groups of 'Clerks Regular', or clerics living under rule. The Pope agreed, asking Camillus to send him an *aide mémoire* on the matter. A great number of religious Orders had worn a cross on their habits—the Trinitarians, occupied with rescuing slaves: the Crociferi, chiefly de-

¹ I must be forgiven if I recall that most striking scene when Aloysius Gonzaga, into whom the whole heredity of that frightful clan had flowed, knelt at the feet of the Pope who had been a swineherd and a Franciscan and was very nearly the Hildebrand of his brief reign, and asked but to renounce all coronets and money-bags. Sixtus enquired if really he understood what he was undertaking. The young Saint said Yes, and the Pope blessed this youth of 'twisted iron' and sent him to his vocation.

voted to pilgrims (these had proved too decadent to survive and were suppressed by Alexander VII in 1656): all sorts of 'Hospitaller' Orders like the Knights Templar; and in fact the badge of Santo Spirito displayed, beneath the Dove, a double-barred cross made, when worn on the dress, of white cloth. Camillus asked for a cross that was not precisely red, but 'lion-coloured', or *tané*, i.e., the rare heraldic tincture *tenné*, i.e., tawny. Thus, said he, it would be more like the wood of the Cross. As time went on, the cross became larger than what Sixtus had granted, and the colour more vivid—in fact, it settled down to being quite simply red. Into details of size we need not enter, but simply register the suggestion made by a religious of a different Order that the Camillans should wear a dress entirely of the *tenné* colour. This startling suggestion was naturally turned down. The Cross was officially granted by a Brief of June 26, 1586, and on the 29th, feast of SS. Peter and Paul, Camillus with seven companions went to St. Peter's wearing it.

The crowds were quick to notice it. Who were these men? Jesuits back from India or the Holy Sepulchre? Well—anyway, the Knights del Sasso, of the Rock, a sort of vague pun upon *Sassia*. Above all, they wished to know why it was worn on the right breast, and not on the left, according to custom. They were told that it was done just to distinguish it from other crosses, and lest, when the right-hand folds of the cloak were drawn across the breast, the crosses should be hidden. And also, to alarm the Devil. When worn on the left, the cross represented a shield: on the right, it became a sword. But as Camillus said, it indicated that his Society was a society of the Cross, that is, of toil, suffering and even death, for none could live in it without thus entirely renouncing self and following Christ, and Him crucified. Of the further history of this symbol, we speak later on (p. 171).

Only one more event need be mentioned before we consider the origins of St. Camillus' society as sufficiently dealt with. The Society continued to grow: the tawny cross was recognised in the streets and kissed. Among the recruits was a most brilliant Sicilian, Biagio Opertis, born in 1561 and received by Camillus in November, 1586: he was already a priest and something of a genius and most versatile. This makes it the more remarkable that he was also very prudent and something of a curb on Camillus's ardent impetuosity. Meanwhile the house in the Street of Dark Shops had grown too small, especially as it contained no chapel and with an increasing number of priest associates they had inconveniently to seek an altar in the churches round. On the vigil of the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, Camillus passed by the church dedicated in honour of that Saint in the Rione Colonna near the Pantheon. He went in to gain the indulgence, and thought that the church would be very suitable to his Society, though it was in a deplorable state of deterioration. Negotiations were successfully through: even the public authorities came to his aid: in December the Camillans were able to take possession of the church and the adjoining houses, which bit by bit were adapted to the use of a Community. Hither, too, came Fr. Curzio, fully convalescent, and Fr. Profeta, who had been extricated from his lawsuit. There arrived, too, a certain Juan de Adamo, a Spaniard, who had come to Rome to get a new Spanish community intended to nurse the sick in hospitals approved in Rome. Everyone persuaded him to join Camillus. He remained perplexed till one day he took from his pocket a little white cross that he had brought from Spain—and lo! it had turned red. This settled him. From December 1586, therefore, Camillus took over St. Mary Magdalen's (which we shall call more briefly the Maddalena) and the church and the house

have remained ever since the centre of the Society of Servants of the Sick.

The Society therefore had been founded, and its habitation had been chosen and occupied. Henceforward, we have to look towards growth, and outward spread.

IV

Camillus foresaw development *ad indefinitum*, because he wanted the service of the sick in private houses to be pressed forward: for if the Hospital was like an 'inland sea', work in private houses was like an ocean without shores. He can hardly however have failed to realise that its dangers were much greater for the unformed or unstable. First of all, he himself abdicated the hearing of the confessions of his associates. It is always unwise for a superior to hear his community's confessions, for it may be hard to keep the knowledge of what is actually said in confession absolutely separated, as it must be kept, from knowledge or surmise obtained in other ways, e.g. by avowal outside the confessional, by legitimate information, by sheer intuition, or observation. But he himself thought he was scrupulous and might do harm to consciences: and Philip Neri had to tell this intransigent and ardent man, who measured others by himself, that he was forming apostles, not hermits, and ought to go more gently. He appointed, therefore, a confessor for the house, and a priest who should supervise the year of 'noviciate' before an applicant might be admitted to make what was called his 'profession', though of course no vows were taken. The candidate made a protestation, in the form of a prayer, that he wished to spend his life in poverty, chastity and obedience and in the service of "our sons and my brothers," the sick. After this, Camillus

gave him the cross, while the brothers sang: "He that will follow Me, let him renounce himself, and take up his cross, and follow me", and: "Far from Me to boast save through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me and I to it". Camillus was firmly convinced that he himself walked in the common or ordinary paths, and did not want his disciples to be sentimental or extravagant and wished that while their whole lives, in one sense, in and out of the house, should be prayer, yet that that prayer should not be made for the sake of heavenly sweetness, nor was a prayer satisfactory which "amputated the arms of charity". One ought always to have one's coat on, to go out to do charity. So while he was pleased if his men learnt this or that from books, his own books were ever first and foremost the sick and the dying. He wrote, in large letters, over one of the doors in the house: "Brother, if you do a bad thing with pleasure, the pleasure passes and the badness remains: if you wearily do a good thing, the weariness passes, and the good remains." We must definitely see in Camillus a Saint proper to the period of Action. The history of the religious life has not always equally esteemed activity. Camillus was clear that his vocation and that of his Order was: the service of the sick. *But*, the sick man, to be served Christian-wise, must always be "the Sacrament of Christ": the veil of Jesus. This was the explanation of his quite extraordinary influence over men: and, of his no less amazing intuition of their thoughts and inner movements. When he perceived that a soul would be responsive, or needed stimulus, he simply laid his hand on the man's head: that seemed to suffice. In fact, it became almost a joke: young men ran away, it was said, lest Camillus should thus touch them, and lest they should feel they had forthwith to renounce the world and self: but, better, when in temptation,

men constantly found that it sufficed that Camillus should trace the cross on their forehead, or lay his hand upon their head, for the too-strong attraction to be vanquished.

After a while, he appointed a group of three priests and six Brothers who should meet usually twice a week, to discuss the needs of the moment and give him advice. One counsel which pleased him much was that the sick in prisons should be specifically remembered.

After the opening of the Maddalena, a certain Dr. Mira of Naples, (afterwards bishop and archbishop) used to say Mass there, and was lost in admiration of the new Society. He had spoken to an Oratorian of Naples, Fr. Borla, a true disciple of St. Charles Borromeo and of St. Philip Neri, and indeed of his own archbishop, the B. Paolo d'Arezzo. He wished to reform all the hospitals of Naples, and in view of this had invited the Brothers of St. John of God to go there. Even they were insufficient. So now the Camillans were to go there. It will be impossible to describe all the new foundations in detail. Enough to say of Naples (then under Spanish rule) that it had seemed impossible so much as to interest the soft, seductive and yet most miserable city in its hospitals, and yet, throughout the history of Italian sanctity you will perceive two main fields fertile in Saints—Turin and the north; Naples and the south. In this very year (1588) the "Regular Clerics Minor" were welcomed there with their founder, the very noble Neapolitan, St. Francis Caracciolo: the Servites, the Theatines, the Oratorians, the Do-Good Brothers, St. Gaetano of Vicenza and St. Andrew Avellino were all working there or soon would be. A true reform was in progress and a fair number of distinguished and wealthy persons recovered hope and helped it forward, notably Donna Giulia delle Castelle, whose generosity earned her the right to be thought of as Mother of St. Camillus's Congregation there.

Fr. Opertis was the first superior of the new house—the first of four that the Camillans were to possess there, including the noviciate. Their first work lay in the ‘Incurables’ hospital, founded in 1517–1519 by Vernazza (see p. 11): St. Gaetano had worked there in 1533; yet it had languished and sunk incredibly low. The apparition of the Camillans blew into a blaze all sorts of smouldering fires: a witness says that he remained stupefied at the sight of so many noble persons, right up to the Viceroy and the Cardinal Archbishop, who began to minister in most intimate ways to sick persons near whom he did not see how anyone could bear so much as to stand, let alone to feed them, to make their beds, and to clean their tongues. These layfolk formed groups among themselves who divided up the work, and did away with “that mountain of fear and panic” which barred the way to the ‘Incurables’ even in the case of the most devoted. The Camillans further assumed the care of the Annunziata hospital: but above all, towards the end of 1588, new Spanish troops had arrived in Naples. They were in an appalling state, and put for quarantine into Pozzuoli. The Viceroy implored Opertis to succour them. He set aside five men for this. It was out of the question to leave the sick in galleons dripping with infection: the Camillans carried them in their arms to the ‘Incurables’ and afterwards removed all the soldiers from the ships into a special building. Most of them had no resistance left and died: three of the Camillans themselves succumbed, and practically all, many more than the original five, for substitutes had to be found, fell sick.

In February, 1589, Camillus returned to Naples—did he look, with grief and gratitude (he will forgive us if we look also with a smile . . .) at the stone bench where he had gambled away his shirt in that ‘other life’ already distant? Perhaps he was too intent upon the

future and the work to be done forthwith ! Anyhow young men rushed to his succour : he accepted twelve young candidates in a single day, one of them being that Cicatelli, who, constantly at his side, became his first biographer. Men were drawn to him in different ways : on the whole by the example alike of the Founder and of his disciples. One, having wandered into a hospital to see how the Camillans behaved there, saw an old Father trying to persuade a young man to eat. The patient kept his food in his mouth and then spat it all out into the old man's face. He, on his side, smilingly encouraged the sick lad and gave him the kiss of peace. At times, of course, neophytes left, or had to be sent away : others, tempted to do so, were encouraged by Camillus and obtained, by his all-night prayers, their perseverance. Here is one curious case. One of the twelve we mentioned, the priest Cesare d'Agostino, fell sick of some frightful infection that they half thought was 'leprosy'. In his profound despondency, he was visited by a 'most kindly' Brother, Stefano da Modena, who did all he could to persuade him that his joining the Camillans had proved a mistake ; that he would never get well there, and had better go home. Cesare, profoundly distressed, sent for Camillus and asked how he could have sent and made use of Stefano for such a task. The Saint was astonished and then sent for Stefano that Cesare might hear from his mouth how he had been absent from the house for eight whole days and that the visitor could not have been he. The illusion was assigned forthwith to the devil : not for us either to affirm or to deny it.

In the spring of 1589 Camillus had been 'superior' of his society for three years. The brothers met, and re-elected him. And at this time Cardinal Paleotti of Bologna implored Camillus to send men there too. He refused, for lack of numbers, a lack itself due to the difficulty of

finding the necessary small 'patrimony' for priests. The Cardinal suggested: "Why not try to get the Congregation elevated to being a Religious Order with solemn vows, which would enable Religious to be ordained 'with the title of Poverty'," i.e. committing the Order itself to support them? Camillus hesitated. The Cardinal anyhow insisted that a beginning should be made at Bologna. Camillus went: but the enterprise failed: the Hospital would not accept him, and the two priests who came with him were too few for adequately nursing the sick in private houses. However, Paleotti continued to urge his point, and finally Camillus felt his doubts dissolve, and threw himself with characteristic ardour into drawing up a draft-rule for the future 'Order'—Mondovi and other experts examined and corrected this draft. Sixtus V was pleased with it and sent it to the Congregation of Rites. Cardinal Aldobrandini (afterwards Clement VIII), Father (afterwards Cardinal) Toledo, and St. Philip were against the solemn vows: these rendered the dismissal of unfit subjects more difficult. Cardinals Mondovi, Paleotti and Sfondrati (afterwards Gregory XIV) said that this objection would lie against all Religious Orders alike: anyhow dispensation was *possible*. The favourable decision seemed imminent, when Sixtus V died. All was put back into uncertainty.

Anyhow, in August, 1590, an obscure but terrible epidemic broke out in the quarter of Rome where the ruins of the Baths of Diocletian stand (part of them are now the Church of Sta Maria degli Angeli: the ruins of the Baths extend over a space of 420 by 380 metres and were built by some 40,000 slaves, most of them Christians). The whole district was stiflingly packed with workers sent for by Sixtus V from Lombardy, Liguria and Naples to develop the wool and silk industries. The over-crowding was dreadful; and when the season became abnormally

hot, broken into by torrential rain, and the flooding of the Tiber, the epidemic began to rage, with unparalleled fury. The population of Rome, which under Gregory XIII (1572–1585) had risen from 90,000 to 140,000, had sunk by the beginning of 1591 to 116,698; and naturally the numbers of sick who did not actually die must have been colossal. Camillus began, of course, by organising the distribution of food, and by searching out the sick—for often an entire family would be stricken, and helplessly remain unknown and most likely add to the frightful reek of the city by dying and remaining unburied. Food was distributed not only in the houses but down whole streets, hundreds of yards long. It must certainly have been startling to see the huge Camillus, climbing through windows when doors were blocked; escalading the ruins, reaching the very roofs, in his search for sufferers, and all this, you remember, always in great pain from his unhealing wound and the heavy iron band that he always had to wear to compress his hernia: but what startled people even more was his astounding success with babies. Often he had to take them from dying or infectious mothers, and after the first wails, he always managed to quiet them and even to make them drink fresh milk from two goats that he took around with him; and that strange world was almost more impressed when he met a Cardinal, no less, who affably enquired how the sick were getting on; Camillus said laconically: “They’re getting better”: the Cardinal continued his enquiries—“Oh, most illustrious my Lord” exclaimed the poor man, “I beg you for the love of God not to go on talking to me: I’m already late with this medicine that I’m taking to a man.” And off he went, leaving the illustrious one stupefied with admiration. But Cardinals and Sixtus himself were often at Camillus’s side as he made his rounds, and were deeply touched alike by his force and his tenderness.

Alas, Sixtus himself caught the infection and died but a few days later.

The blow was severe, but the new Pontiff, Urban VII, promised whole-hearted help. "The treasures of the Church", said he, "exist but for the poor." Alas, he too died hardly a fortnight after his election. The following conclave lasted two months: Cardinal Sfondrati, another friend, became Pope as Gregory XIV. But famine had added itself to plague, and the vile practices of profiteering by conscienceless grain-merchants had made things wickedly worse. Howling mobs patrolled Rome, or flitted like ghosts around the walls: and as winter approached, you would see those who but recently had been perishing with thirst and chewing the last remaining blades of grass, crawling into dung-heaps in the hopes of warmth. Camillus had for a long time organised an immense soup-centre at the Maddalena, where he first—as always—began by distributing the hot food and a little cup of wine, and then washed the sick and listened to the special woes of each, and, when possible, lifted their thoughts also to spiritual things. But now he had to collect all the old clothes he could, and get such cloth as he might, and, with a staff of fifteen tailors, made, or re-made, clothes for these shivering creatures, whom, if he met them in the street, in bitter cold or rain, he would cover with his own cloak and bring them home. Finally, albeit he knew that he was cheated, not least by men having gambled away what he had given them, and then coming back for more . . . perhaps he remembered his own past days when he had to go shirtless, in no case would he merely rebuke them, but reminded himself, and his critics, of the presence of Jesus Christ in them, and then did what he could for them.

One feature of his charity that profoundly impressed his contemporaries was this—the enormous Roman ruins

—the Forum, the Colosseum, the Palatine, the Baths of Caracalla and many another, are full of mysterious pits, caverns, labyrinthine corridors and secret vaults. Hither streamed a throng of sick who were most of them also desperate criminals. And hither, by day and by night, came Camillus with eight of his strongest men, and four litter-carriers, and himself carrying a sack containing brandy and first-aid necessities, heralding his approach by the cry: “God save you, you sons of God !” anticipating thus the panic into which any unknown footsteps threw such men—and such panic is, how often, but the prelude to murder. Even he had to hold his breath lest he should be too sickened by the reek of these horrible recesses. And into such a state of nervous paralysis had sickness and starvation not seldom reduced these living skeletons, that he might have to force their teeth open in order to give them a mouthful of food and drink. The new Pope, a man of learning and piety rather than of practical energy, felt overwhelmed by the situation and handed over most of the control of Rome to his nephew Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrati; but despite all food-rationing the situation got out of hand, not least because when an attempt was made to allot the homeless to hospitals, and, in particular, to the hospice for the destitute created by Sixtus V, they fought against this infringement of their ‘liberty’ and either rioted or hid from the soldier-police who had to be sent to excavate them. Camillus tried to get in first; nothing stopped him. Once, when he had found eight such men lurking outside the Porta del Popolo, he persuaded them to come back to Santo Spirito: one fell exhausted by the way: Camillus held up a grand carriage full of noblemen and demanded, for the love of God, to put the dying man into it. The gentlemen got out, and Camillus, with his eight deplorable clients, rode triumphantly back to the Hospital. It was dreadful to

him that these men, however little claim they had on Rome (for they had poured in from the country, imagining that in Rome all was gold) . . . should have to be driven forth, back to their homes, even though life would be easier there, and though to each was given a little journey money and food. When the first sorry little fleet was for starting down the Tiber, Camillus stood imploring the boatmen to pause. Their captain refused. Camillus, something of the old red-hot temper stirring within him, said 'through his teeth', that he could not understand how, if there was enough bread in Rome for so many Jews, there could not be enough for these poor Christians. The captain was obstinate. Camillus undertook to support them himself. After a while, the captain, who was only doing his duty, got furious. Camillus recovered his calm, knelt down, and begged to be given at least the most sick, lest they perish by the roadside. The captain reluctantly allowed him to choose ten out of the whole multitude. Agony of such a choice ! Torture to have to refuse all but those ten ! He stood on the quay, weeping, till the boat was lost to sight. However, the captain referred the matter to the Governor of Rome, who sent for Camillus and reprimanded him, and indeed the Pope himself had to say to him that discipline must, after all, be observed.

At the beginning of 1591, he realised that yet another hospital must be opened.¹ Sixtus V's hospital was

¹I ought perhaps to recall that the Camillans were by no means the only men who laboured during this plague, but this is a Life of St. Camillus, and so I say nothing of the specific work of the Oratorians, the Brothers of St. John of God, or the Jesuits, who opened at least two hospitals and so many of whose members, both older and young, fell victims to their heroism. Still, I may recall that it was in this plague that St. Aloysius Gonzaga caught the infection from carrying a man to hospital. From evidence connected with his life too, one can gather how truly the hospitals were a Purgatory on earth—so many men rushing about naked, shouting and blaspheming, and dying on staircases or in the streets. St. Aloysius recovered from the plague as such, but could not regain his strength: he died on June 20–21, 1591.

horribly over-crowded, and the filth and lice were incredible. It was impossible to breathe freely: "lungs and blood were saturated with the exhalations: the mental faculties were paralysed." The Camillans became so poisoned with the atmosphere that they could retain no food: between January and February, five of the original eight died. In January of 1591 exanthematic typhus declared itself, rising steadily in intensity till mid-summer. Gregory XIV in his goodness wanted to endow the Camillans with an income: they refused this, and seized the opportunity of petitioning to be made into an Order. But they begged that the Pope in place of enriching them would open a new hospital near Sta Maria in Cosmedin, which he did, in the via Santo Stefano delle Carrozze. He did so: and the new house became in a special sense Camillus's Hospital. Into it he carried from San Sisto a seemingly strange assortment of convalescents and of the very worst cases: yet after all, the plan was reasonable: the convalescents had to get out to make room for new cases: and the really bad cases made the place intolerable for the intermediate ones. So in two parts of the new hospital, Camillus cared for these two categories and it was on their account that even his own companions were liable to lament, when he took away their last sack of flour, that he was guilty, so to say, of certain "holy imprudences, holy indignations". And when he went to Mgr. Centurione, administrator of the food department of Rome, asked for grain, and was refused because there was hardly enough for the bakers of Rome, he shouted with a 'terrible voice' (to be heard by Centurione who was ill in bed) that he, Camillus, would hold himself innocent before God, but would cite the Administrator before the divine tribunal. He simply could not understand that the sick should not come first. In spite of everything, his companions kept dying. Bubonic plague too was

discovered: doctors and infirmarians lost their heads and many left their posts: a contemporary doctor insisted that he could not stay a quarter of an hour in Camillus's hospital where the worst cases were, without getting appalling headaches: he simply could not understand how Camillus was there all the time, and recognised it must be due to a grace of God, in whom, whatever he was saying or doing, Camillus seemed to remain absorbed. And indeed, he now appeared able to do also without sleep: he wept, because he had to eat, while others went hungry: but he now spent half his nights cooking what he thought could tempt the exhausted patients, and displaying astonishing ingenuity and inventiveness in this: all the same, he would not profit by dispensations from fasting or abstinence, partly from pious motives, but also because he thought people ate and drank too much, and that the relative immunity of his associates was due to their abstemiousness. We have, however, to confess that once the plague began to abate, he had not only to order them to halve their work, or to take turns, day in, day out, or even, as at Naples, to reduce their work in prisons to daily visits—they were being treated almost as warders—but he himself had to take for some time an enforced repose. The wound in his leg had become much worse, and the other leg was swelling up badly.

But this unusual leisure permitted him to turn his mind again to the future of his Society. He entrusted the matter to Fr. Opertis, knowing him more apt than himself for legal and diplomatic transactions. Mass was offered many a time and penances done to obtain divine guidance for those concerned: Camillus went—or, I think more probably proposed later on to go—to Loreto. The Pope handed the matter back once more to the proper Congregation, whose members, having seen what Camillus and his comrades had done during the last year, could have

nothing now to say against his plans. However, the impetuous man felt they were going too slowly and went off to their Office, the Dataria, and urged haste with such vigour that he earned a sharp rebuke for his importunity. Still, it had been fortunate. On September 21, the Pope signed the Bull erecting the Congregation into an Order with solemn vows: next day the Pope fell sick, took to his bed, and died on October 29. Without Camillus's 'importunity' probably the whole thing would have had to be off till the next Pontificate. As it was, Innocent IX could immediately promulgate the Bull that his predecessor had signed. Meanwhile Camillus had thought of placing the actual ceremony of the Profession of the Solemn Vows on September 29 (which would really have been too rushed !) or on October 4: these were the feasts of St. Michael the Archangel and of St. Francis of Assisi whom he had always devotedly loved—in fact he placed the new Order under their special protection—but the death of the Pontiff and the preoccupations of the Conclave and the new reign decided him to put it off still further. He chose December 8, Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Camillus's life had kept pace, in its main phases, with our Lady's Feasts. On February 2, 1575, feast of her Purification, he had been converted: on August 15, the Assumption, 1582, he had been inspired to create his special Institute: on the Octave of her Nativity, September 15, 1584, he had actually inaugurated it at the Madonnina. The Order should be born on the Feast of her Immaculate Conception. This permitted, too, the completion of the work of restoring the Maddalena and adapting the two houses he had bought beside and behind it. It is noteworthy that the earliest biographers of Camillus and other Camillan documents always speak of the *Immaculate Conception*, though the belief in it was not of course defined till long afterwards (1854); and devotion to Our

Lady, thus entitled, was continuous and fervent throughout the history of the Camillans.¹

On December 3, Camillus wrote to his cousin Onofrio at Bucchianico in a reply to a letter recently received to tell him of the great event now imminent: this letter still survives. In it, he regrets to hear of the death of his aunt and a cousin Vittoria: is distressed that brigands are reappearing now that the firm hand of Sixtus has disappeared and hopes that Onofrio will not suffer at their hands. Camillus himself is terribly busy because next Sunday, December 8, will see the Foundation of the new Order: he hopes that some Cardinals who are favourable to it will be present at so great a solemnity—he would have asked Onofrio to come had not the roads been insecure and the house-room too restricted. He cries out with amazement not only that God should have worked such a miracle as to create this order, but that He should have made use of, for doing so, such a great sinner as himself who deserves but 1,000 hells. He hopes that all will be done according to the will of God, both

¹There is a tradition that these solemn Vows were pronounced at the feet of a certain statue representing the 'Immaculate Conception' more or less after the fashion of Murillo's famous picture, and that the statue had formed part of the adornment of the Maddalena when the Camillans took the church over. No document attests this or anything else about the statue. (See an article—anonymous—in *Domesticum*, 1941, 5, published in Rome on Dec. 8 of that year, the 350th anniversary of the first Profession.) Experts, however, declare that the statue seems to be derived from the art-style of the Caracci: in that case it cannot be earlier than 1595, when Annibale, the first of the Caracci to arrive in Rome, came there: and if it is a derivation, it must be later still. The House contained three other representations of the Immaculate Conception: one is a rather conventional stucco statue of over two metres high: this is in the part of the house that has been taken over by the State for a school. The second is part of a fresco on the roof of the sacristy and belongs to 1791: it represents Our Lady Immaculate, a little lower, St. Philip Neri, and then Camillus who was about to be beatified. The third is in a niche in the corridor leading from the piazza to the sacristy. It represents Our Lady stooping towards St Camillus who is offering to her his sons. It may belong to the Neapolitan school of plaster-work and dates from perhaps 1750. A northerner may possibly feel that it owes its real charm to its extreme naïvety.

here and at Naples. He then exhorts his cousin to walk in the way of the commandments, and to give generous alms, and be the friend of the poor, in these calamitous times, especially as the Lord has given him the means to be so.

On December 7, the Superior-General was voted for: all votes in Naples as in Rome went to Camillus, who with much simplicity had begged the Fathers and Brothers to take no heed of personal feeling, but vote exclusively according as they thought would be best for the Order; to remember his roughness, his ignorance, his many defects, his age and his grave illness. And only *then* twenty-five out of the thirty-five Religious were selected for Profession the next day. Camillus then formally restored to Fermo Calvi the patrimony that he had given to him to enable him to advance towards the priesthood. Next morning, the 8th, a considerable crowd filled the Maddalena: Religious Orders were represented, especially the Capuchins, the Oratorians and the Jesuits. Men who had early been Camillus's friends, Calvi, Virgilio Crescenzi and his sons, were present. Finally, the Archbishop of Ragusa celebrated High Mass, read out the Bull, and accepted the vows of Camillus on his knees before him. Camillus himself then accepted the vows of his twenty-five companions. Then he said Mass, and gave Holy Communion to each of the new Professed. This was followed by a meal slightly less austere than that was normal among the Camillans: and at the end of it, Camillus asked Fra Giuseppe of Malta, a Capuchin who had been with him in the noviciate of Manfredonia, to relate how God had converted him—Camillus—and the kind of life they had noted in him in the noviciate. Fra Giuseppe said what he could, but was not nearly condemnatory enough to please Camillus, who took up his prosecution into his own hands and proceeded to make what amounted very nearly to a general confession.

I break off for a moment, to acknowledge that a modern reader may well feel disconcerted by this tiny episode and indeed dislike and actually disapprove of it. Such lack of reticence is distasteful to him: he is ready to believe that Camillus was no hypocrite nor wanted to win praise under pretence of seeking humiliation; but, he feels, why talk about Self at all? why obtain that Self be talked about and not rather be eclipsed? And if we northerners can imagine this sort of digging up of past and not too edifying memories, we can possibly picture it as being meant for a sort of joke, not in very good taste, as when a middle-aged man swops memories with another of their youthful revels. I will say at once that while what little is quoted as having been actually said by Camillus (I do not count prayers or speeches, etc., that are the sort of thing the biographer feels suitable to the moment) is brisk, indeed sometimes racy, and in short what I have called 'rough', I honestly cannot find any symptoms of a sense of *humour*; and whatever wit or rustic humour may have been his, he most certainly did not look at his early misdemeanours as jokes or material for facetiousness. Further, he was extremely realist (Italians *are*), and at the same time *intense* in what he felt. He saw he had reached a point at which much honour was being done him. He had created a religious Order just when others, much more suitable than he, had been refused: he had been unanimously elected General. All this, he felt acutely, was falsifying his personal perspective. People *must not* be left with so false an impression. He did not feel merely that his new halo was but tinsel, and cynically hold his tongue about it: he felt he must tear it off, and fancied in his simplicity that Fr. Giuseppe would do so. But he that was called, if not to curse, at least not to praise, did praise; and Camillus saw that just what he had feared would happen, was happening. It seems also that he thought his work was

really over, once he had founded the Order: he felt inapt to govern it. It has often been quoted about Newman: "Thou couldst a people raise, but couldst not lead": Camillus certainly thought that about himself, though he would have insisted that God, not he, did the 'raising'. But then, his friends could have retorted, and doubtless did, that God could do the leading equally well, by means of His instrument Camillus. Anyhow, that evening there was a pathetic little ceremony of self-expropriation: all brought everything that was at their service, and placed it upon the ground. They, and Camillus equally, then received back for their use, not their personal property, what was necessary, as alms from the entire community. During the following days, Camillus took the Bull around, showing it to friends: Philip Neri visited the house, embraced Camillus, and declared that the Foundation seemed to him a true miracle and the work of God, not of men; and later, when Virgilio Crescenzi was dying, Philip returned and urged one of the Camillans to take special care of this duty to the dying, for, said he, "I have seen the Angel of the Lord setting the very words upon the lips of one of you, when he helped a man to die." Thus these days were spent in gratitude, and in arousing a spirit of trust for the future, seeing that God who had begun so good a work would assuredly be true to it and bring it to perfection.

PART II

I

IN this second part, I must omit more than in the first. For it consists largely of the story of the development of the Order, which means, its continually passing through difficulties always more or less of the same sort, earning successes not very different from one another, losing by death and acquiring by new vocation men whose names might often enough be surrounded by a detail or two, a date or two, but whose brief 'notice' would not help readers to gain a view of the work as a whole. That Camillus had done a really *original* work we see from this—The Company of Divine Love (Genoa, 1497) in a true sense inaugurated a new idea of hospital-work, and indeed created or inspired a whole series of 'Incurables' Hospitals, and set up a Society of *Sta Maria del Ridotto* to concern itself with the well-being of the first one. But *neither* of these two Societies had, as its specific work, the care of the sick: still less did they develop any systematic method of caring for the sick, nor did their members devote themselves to such care as a whole-time occupation, let alone vocation. Now Camillus did exactly that. He learnt from the past, inasmuch as all his first experience was at San Giacomo, nor did he ever dissociate himself therefrom: the charitable life continued to flow in the organic unity of the Church. But Camillus, by his specific creation of the Order of Ministers of the Sick, carried the whole of that flow further, and made possible a reform of a most definite kind within the Church, to be copied only after a very long time elsewhere.

On January 30, 1592, Cardinal Aldobrandini became

Pope, as Clement VIII, in succession to Innocent IX who had died after only two months' reign. The new Pope was very devout, highly experienced, learned and hard working, and though he had opposed the formation of Camillus's new order—or of any new order—what he had seen had thoroughly converted him too; he confirmed the Order and indeed simplified certain points previously insisted on. Camillus, full of gratitude, went to Naples, and then, accompanied by Br. Curzio, to Buccianico. His arrival brought people trooping from all directions: the Red Cross on his breast revived the memory of that old dream of his mother's and explained it. However, he found his cousin Onofrio in a deplorable condition—paralysed and filthy, though having accumulated much wealth. It was said that this man was unstable and shifty in all ways save the one quality of avarice. Camillus nursed him, and won his heart—at least for a time. Better, he discovered a certain Giovanni Mammarella, a “mighty man of blasphemy”. His life had been lived among beasts . . . how should his thoughts and talk *not* have become degraded? Camillus characteristically said: “Here is the Great Beast!” on entering the poor man's house. Then, crucifix in hand, he entered various rooms, saying: “Come out of here, Great Beast.” After this very informal exorcism, he reached the poor old blind man's room: here was no talk of beasts! He was with him daily, yes, and nightly, studying his soul with much labour: finally the old man made an excellent confession and soon died. While not visiting the poorer sick, he spent all the time he could with Onofrio, who had been given up for dying. Camillus prayed long and did much penance: then, one morning, he approached his cousin, took him by the hand, and told him to cheer up—“for God, *this time*, has forgiven you!” Onofrio rose, cured: but spiritually, we shall see, he relapsed, and therefore, also

bodily. After this, Camillus astonished various people by paying off small debts which the creditors had forgotten: he also "introduced the practice of teaching Christian doctrine to children and the people", an enterprise hitherto unknown in that town. He then went, according to plan, to Loreto: but, returning, he fell from his horse and hurt his leg so badly that when he was able to proceed, he and Curzio sat in two baskets, suspended across the poor animal's back. (Yet you will see how fond Camillus was of animals, as he was of children and convalescents and all the weak and helpless.) He returned to Rome to find that the confraternity from whom he had bought—but not yet paid for—the Maddalena were proposing to throw all the furniture out of the window and they did in fact levy a distraint upon a house which Calvi had recently presented to the Order. Camillus recalled what Christ had said to St. Catherine of Siena—"Think of Me, and I will think for you": "Let *us* think of Christ and His Poor", said Camillus, "and He will give us in abundance what He has not refused even to the Turks and the Jews!" He went in fact to the Pope, on the feast of the Poor Man of Assisi, and the Pope, touched, promised to pay the annual rent and taxes, 370 sc. Camillus thought that this eternal paying of interest was no good: he would buy the house outright. The Confraternity jeered at him, but he said he would have the money within the year—maybe within a month or two. This indeed happened, though the ways of Providence were disconcerting. Cardinal Mondovi fell sick: Camillus nursed him and was with him when he died. The Cardinal, after making a few bequests, left the mass of his fortune to the Order begging that his funeral might be carried out without any grand ceremonies. The Confraternity heard of this bequest, and prepared a magnificent grant of "participation in all its privileges", which they presented to Camillus in the middle of the

funeral—he had asked the Pope to allow it after all to be ‘ceremonious’—in fact, just as the procession was crossing the bridge of Sta Maria, hoping thus to recall to Camillus the debt. (This bridge was swept away in the inundations of 1598. You see its ruins close to the Island of the Tiber.) Camillus thanked God that the debt *could* be paid, and at once. Yet not so easily! Cardinal Mondovi had not felt sure that the Order, vowed to poverty, *could* inherit. A nephew of the late Cardinal’s instantly started a law-suit. Camillus remained indifferent. The lawyers finally decided that Camillus, of course, could inherit nothing personally; nor could the Order inherit anything to be kept and used for annual revenue, but that it could inherit and sell the bequest, and apply the money to necessary purposes. Having paid his debts, Camillus made further improvements to the Maddalena house—edifying everyone by the humility with which he joined in the work of the bricklayers, the mortar-mixers and so forth. I mention this simply to indicate once more how different has become our perspective. *We* might think it good fun, or a bore, to help bricklayers: but which of us would find it a humiliation? who would be ‘edified’ by our doing so? And who, save Religious Orders, would *try* to be *unable* to inherit?

Meanwhile Camillus begged Clement to provide the Order with a Cardinal Protector, now that Mondovi had died. He asked if they might have Cardinal Salviati, once so well known at San Giacomo. “You have chosen well”, said the Pope, and when he twice visited Santo Spirito in person, and always found Camillus working there at the genuinely humblest tasks, took him for over an hour into a private room, and discussed all the reforms that Camillus thought ought to be introduced into the Hospital. And all the while, by letters and by visits, Camillus was guiding Naples, its work, and its novices.

Camillus now began to be preoccupied with the idea of extension—though he was ruthlessly kind in sending the unfit away: novices had multiplied. He consulted Salviati who was against it. Also Opertis, who hesitated. Finally, he sent Fr. Nigli with five companions, and followed them with eight more, to Milan, trusting to the prayers of St. Charles Borromeo, who had died just ten years earlier. He arrived in Milan without any letters of recommendation on June 4, 1594, obtained approbation, and did no more than to establish his Religious there, leaving it on August 12 for Genoa with, this time, letters of introduction, possibly because the famous Hospital there might have thought it could look after itself. On arriving at such a place, he first adored Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and then, in the sick of the Hospital: over the door of the hospital church at Casal Monferrato in Piedmont was to be carved: "To Christ, God and Man, sick in the person of the Poor—homage of Love." This vital spark, animating all he did, without which he would have known his work to be dead, must never be forgotten unless we wish utterly to misconstrue St. Camillus. Thence he went for a brief while to visit two of his Religious at Turin, and thence to Milan once more. The visit was to be momentous, for during it, at Magenta, he realised that his associates should be more 'learned' than he had at first foreseen—and this was only what St. Francis's friars came soon enough to experience. But by learning, Camillus did not mean anything recondite or general: they were to learn more theology, philosophy, ethics, and all that could be of service not only in the Hospital, but in church. At first he had been very reluctant to allow them to perform any apostolate outside the hospitals or at most the sick-room.

I think Camillus made this decision, humanly speaking, because he noticed into what close contact with the sick

a priest may come, and how very important it is to understand *minds* when you are trying to heal the body. True, I think he saw this first in terms of directly instructing the sick (or others) and of explaining the Faith to them; but it is almost impossible to suppose that with all the experience of human nature that he was accumulating, he did not realise how important it was to pacify a patient's anxieties, and often to 'build up' a mind in one who was too confused or too will-less to be able to co-operate with his cure. Camillus by this education did not mean medical (or nursing) training. In this department, he simply attended doctors on their rounds, took notes, and did what they told him to. Afterwards, he watched and took notes about the patients he was nursing, and mentioned to doctors what he might have observed, and so forth. But, so far, at any rate, he does not seem to have received, or looked forward to, any professional training. True, he was so extraordinarily sensitive as to possess practically second-sight: how much of this was a preternatural gift, no one can estimate: but we need not suppose that all of it was. Unselfish sensitive people are often astoundingly 'intuitive'. Anyhow, Camillus, who began by being rather antipathetic towards studies, became less so, and we recall the Jesuits, who certainly now welcome the development of their lay-brothers' intelligence, whereas St. Ignatius ruled that they were not to learn more 'letters' than they arrived possessed of. Thus Camillus opened the door to every future development, and the Camillans, like any Catholic nursing community, welcome every increase of knowledge, practical or theoretical, that their members may acquire. He will be a very willing Patron for those groups of Catholic doctors, or medical students, or nurses, lay or 'religious', and of course of Catholic hospitals, all of which we trust may develop more and more, both in numbers and in quality.

All these stories of travel are starred with little anecdotes, which, while they throw more rays of light on the character of Camillus, cannot possibly be all of them recounted here: indeed, too great an accumulation of them would be tedious, as any conversation composed of anecdotes is bound to become. Yet I will mention, here and there, some of them, of various sorts, if only because a list of dates and of names of places would be even more monotonous and unilluminative. I deliberately omit some which merely underline the devotedness of Camillus—if readers have not already guessed it, despite remembering the continuous torment due to his leg and rupture that accompanied his work, which seemed to the most enthusiastic, even, of his companions, superhuman—they never will. I omit, too, numerous small incidents which may or may not have been miraculous or prophetic. We hold it as quite certain that Camillus saw into men's minds and had intuitions of the future which outstrip what is merely normal; but only because of the circumstances, at times, can we surmise that they were probably helped by some special grace from God; the same holds good for many of the cures he effected. And some I shall insert simply because they show how strangely different were many of the external circumstances of sixteenth century life from our own. Here is one example. When, about the end of August, he went on board at Genoa to sail for Naples, he perceived a crowd of young sailors behaving indecently, and in public, with a Spanish girl. Crucifix in hand, he turned on them, exclaiming: "I do not know how the tremendous justice of God can have such patience with you, and does not cause you to be instantly swallowed up by the sea or send thunderbolts from heaven to blast you to ashes. But God does not pay every Saturday—keep in mind what I tell you—for His punishment will not fail both you and all this ship, if you do not change your life

soon." And indeed within a year they were all drowned in the Gulf of Lyons. Now how are we to judge that? I do not mean, Was this a prediction and was the future preternaturally foreseen? For Camillus was quite certain to make some such threat (he very often did), and shipwrecks were terribly common: let anyone who has sailed the Mediterranean in a gale think what would so easily happen to those clumsy ships. Nor do I take for granted that we have Camillus's exact words—he is said to have cried out, in ringing tones, much more than that. But I think it is certain that he said something of the sort, and in particular the little sentence about God not paying his wages every Saturday—that is exactly the rough, almost savage sort of thing missionaries like St. Francis Regis or men of Camillus's character constantly said: it will have stuck in men's minds. But besides that, I will ask you to recall how very far from 'enclosed' was the life led by such men by no means only in hospitals or prisons; and when you read of the rigid care that men like him, or St. Aloysius Gonzaga, maintained over their own senses, remember that they were surrounded by, and never hesitated to confront, the most dreadful spectacles when the service of God demanded it. There was nothing 'respectable'—there *could* not be—let alone 'prudish'—about the lives they lived: *our* eyes and ears need seldom be thus assaulted by what was then commonplace and public. As a contrast, on the same journey, Camillus spent his first night in a cabin. But he heard a gambler uttering the most appalling blasphemies, and, since he could do nothing about it, spent the remaining nights on deck, propped up against a cannon. Can we, too, surmise, that the incident had aroused too vividly memories of his own youth? We know that somehow he had never let himself slip into blasphemy: but what of his habitual companions then?

Another quaint little incident. He returned from Naples to Rome and again went to Naples with several companions. They could not afford a horse each, but took it in turns to ride. A novice lost himself, one evening. Camillus hunted for him all night, but he had got into a hut for shelter. Next morning however he made his way to Velletri, and Camillus and his band caught him up there. Had he been to Mass? No. Camillus "plunged himself into a deep thought, and was much distressed by this, and could find no rest". He wanted to dismount, and make the novice ride off "to find a Mass". But they assured him that it would be impossible to "find a Mass" at that place, and at that hour.

Winter came. It was announced that there was plague at Milan. Camillus with seven companions instantly decided to go there. Only five horses could be found. No matter, they would again take turns. Camillus's doctor implored him not to go—The winter! the rotten roads! the rain! He would provoke erysipelas and his whole leg would become inflamed! No: Camillus went off, travelling all day and often at night, fearful lest the frontier into the Milanese territory should be closed. He rode ahead, especially in dangerous country, so that the others might have due warning of flood, of broken roads, of brigands. They left Tortona at dawn for Pavia. The sun rose on an exquisite scene of hillsides sparkling with snow. Camillus halted and prayed. Then turning to his friends he said: "Does not this lovely landscape make you pray?" And they, too, prayed—his own prayer had never left off, and indeed once he never noticed that they had had to ford a torrent. Are we reminded of St. Bernard, who so often did not notice what was around him? Perhaps we are nearer to St. Gertrude, a soul so deeply mortified, yet who loved to watch birds fluttering round the water that ran so musically through the convent enclosure. Light,

colour, harmony, helped her to pray *better*. Anyhow, we like to catch Camillus, that 'hard' man, as we keep saying, thrilled by the sudden enchantment of the Italian 'vast' view, and the snow dancing beneath the dazzle of the dawn. Thereupon they met peasants. "Do not go to Milan," they cried. "There is plague there!" "That is exactly, that is exactly," he cried joyously, "why we are going there!" Between April and December, then, of 1594, Camillus had travelled some 2,000 kilometres by land, and as much by sea. Remember that quite apart from pirates who infested the coasts, and storms, the galleys were often manned by criminals who were condemned to the oar and who rowed only when forced to. A fine weather trip from Genoa to Naples would take eight or nine days. Though I do not think we read of Camillus devoting himself to these poor men as St. Vincent de Paul so soon was to do, I feel sure he *did*, and that he found an admirable response. There is always something about the sea which stirs the best in men—or at least makes it most easily accessible: I do not know that these galley-crews were in much worse condition than stokers in a smaller coal-ship, in the Red Sea, to-day. However, one must, again, remember that the structure of the galleys was frightfully cramped: Camillus, poor giant, *never* could stand upright, below decks, and half the time had his head bent down and was "practically on his knees". As for the roads, they were, of course, appalling: St. Aloysius, crossing a torrent in a very grand carriage, found the carriage break in half in the middle, was swept away, and saved only because he stuck in a fallen tree. . . . But you need not be crossing a river for disaster, and Camillus hardly ever found himself in a coach save perhaps in a town. Manzoni, so much later, tells how the roads even then were no better than dried river-beds—dried? they were full of pits, out of which

it was all you could do to drag your feet, not to mention your shoes. No wonder that Camillus, so little able to help himself with a leg that was now almost gangrenous from knee to foot, fell thirty times from his horse—falls that might have been fatal: 'easier' falls were uncountable.

Camillus, who never could bear anyone saying that a sick man was 'disgusting', but who covered them all with the cloak of most tender charity, as themselves being truly Christ, suddenly remembered, at Milan, as though he had woken up (said he) from a profound sleep, that his early idea had been to substitute, for paid servants, men who worked for the sole love of God in the hospitals. He called this the 'complete' service, physical as well as spiritual. The governing body of the Milan hospital after long discussion invited him to assign some of his Religious to this 'complete service'. This would have meant not only daily, and all-day, visits (such as they already paid) and preparedness to go there at night if called for, but, *actually* living in the hospitals and doing *all* the work that paid servants did. Camillus jumped at the idea, and wished to oblige all his companions to accept it as part of the concept of their Institute and as imposed on them in virtue of their fourth vow. Hereupon a really grave division of opinion made itself felt. Even though the complete substitution of Religious for paid servants was to admit some exceptions (e.g., holding the post of 'barbers', who did the blood-letting), it seemed clear that Camillus's plan would serve 'more for the benefit of the Governors than of the sick', and free the former from great expense without corresponding gain. How would the sick be better served because a Religious cleaned the lamps, did the washing—and thereby was removed from direct attention *to* the sick? It was pointed out that Camillus himself had written to Opertis that the sick at the Maddalena were far too many and the Religious

far too few for the work to be done properly, and that the Brothers were continually falling ill themselves through over-work and even dying. Work could not be *added*. Again, 'religious' life would in such circumstances become almost impossible: Camillus's original idea had occurred to him when he did not foresee his companions being 'religious' or even priests. Camillus continued to argue that in any case he wanted charity and humility to lead them to take the lowest places, and that authority would be far more ready to admit the Religious into hospitals if they were ready to do, gratis, also the work that hitherto the paid servants had done so badly. Inevitably a compromise was reached: into the details of this evolution we need not go. But the first phase marked so great a crisis that it has been called the Order's 'baptism of blood'. It earned thus the right to survive even when circumstances forced on it the modification, if not abandonment, of the suggested system—not only hospitals have been very largely laicised out of sheer anti-clericalism and the nursing orders of all sorts evicted (not but what they have constantly had to be called back)—but from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, nursing began to emerge from the foul degradation into which it had sunk, and innumerable women, even more than men, nobly exercise that office, even without the conscious support of that Grace on which, when all is said and done, full success depends.

But we must insist that Camillus at any rate had extreme need of grace in what must have been a period of agony to him—and, we will not forget, one of extreme distress also to those who loved him so dearly and looked up to him with profoundest veneration. They could not but think him *wrong*—him, without whom they would never have had, nor have, their inspiration. Yet they tried as long as they could to disguise their feelings, so

terribly afraid they were of hurting him. He saw that at Milan they were accepting only with extreme reluctance the 'complete' charge of the hospital: he went off to Genoa to find men, as he hoped, 'more generous': at Genoa opinion was still more solid against him. He returned to Milan: there, discontent had spread; the local superior made him all too sharply aware of it: Camillus retired, his eyes full of tears, without showing any resentment, yet remembering that he had the very awkward duty of giving his disciple a penance for what amounted very nearly to direct disobedience. But this Religious was a good and humble man, and accepted the penance, which was, to work *personally* at humble tasks in hospitals, with good heart. Camillus hurried to Naples: there at least he would find enthusiasm: and indeed Opertis, against his better judgment, began to negotiate for the taking over, in all departments, the Annunziata hospital.

But God, after asking for a sacrifice, constantly opens new doors to generosity, and did so now for Camillus. Clement VIII had sent his nephew to rescue from the Turks Esztergom, the mother-city of Hungarian Christianity and the baptism-place of St. Istvan. He asked the Jesuits for eight of their members, and Camillus for eight more, though he refused to allow him to go in person to the field of battle. However, he went by way of Genoa, Mantua and Verona to Trent, and there gave his final instructions as to ambulances, 'advanced dressing-stations', as we would now say, and the like. He then returned to Naples. The expedition had at least sent the Camillans for the first time to what was to become specially dear to them as a field of work.

Camillus arrived in Naples in high spirits. He felt sure that here at last he would be able to carry out his plans for 'complete service' with the wholehearted co-operation he so much desired and had failed to obtain elsewhere.

But alas: the Professed Fathers had explained to Opertis that they could not possibly approve of the plan, and Opertis in his heart could not either. Opertis put this as respectfully as he could to Camillus: the difficulties attendant on this innovation would be overwhelming. Camillus was 'stung' by the word 'innovation': the idea had been his since the beginning. (Doubtless, when—I recall again—he was foreseeing a smallish company of laymen.) Camillus called the Community together twice, and spoke to them fervently: but now he found that they were openly against him. In fact, they had composed a memorial, all thirty-six of them, in which they set forth their reasons for holding that the 'total service' of hospitals was, if not impossible, most undesirable. This memorial they gave to Opertis. Camillus called them together a third time, and said that if he could not persuade them, he would have recourse to authority—the Pope's, and his own. Opertis implored him not to do this: indeed, Camillus's personal authority was not *absolute*: Camillus remained obstinate: Opertis produced the memorial, and begged him to convoke the Chapter General to decide. Camillus stood stunned. Then very gently he said he would convene the Chapter in the spring. Thereafter he spoke no more of the 'total service', save that that evening he again assembled them, and begged their pardon for any fault of his; assured them that his intention had been good, and recalled that even between Saints there could be sharp differences of opinion—look at St. Paul and Barnabas. During Paul's first mission-journey, Barnabas's young kinsman John Mark could not bring himself to cross from Cyprus to the mainland and went home. Later on, Barnabas suggested John Mark, a second time, as companion. Paul refused: and a 'bitterness' arose between him and Barnabas, and Paul was separated from both those early companions. Happily,

friendship was restored: nor was there any embitterment between Camillus and his associates—it was still he who was their best support, and in but a few days he was able to restore the ‘will to live’ to a certain priest who had come back to Naples very sick, and having lost all inclination to make the necessary effort.

But this did not mean that Camillus had in the least changed his mind. On the contrary. He began to have the scruple that he had been weakly false to his primitive idea: and critics were not lacking to tell him that his companions were losing their first fervour and were not true to the cross they wore. In October the election of those who should assist at the Chapter was to take place. The question arose—Had the *Brothers* (or only Priests) the right to vote? Camillus, who thought that they at least would be on his side, thought Yes. Everyone else—all canonical or theological authorities in Naples and then Rome, said No, till a Jesuit father suggested that he might ask the Pope for a special permission on behalf of the Brothers. He did so, and it was granted. Opertis came to Rome to discuss the shape in which Camillus’s proposal could be made more palatable to the Chapter. Camillus would have no ‘shape’ for it save his own, and said he was certain that the Chapter would accept it. Opertis returned in torment of mind to Naples, and Camillus went to Milan, where, in that hospital, he found himself “like a fish in water”. But even there, the Religious were experiencing that for priests to be doing the rough work of the house at the bidding of ‘despotic and disrespectful subalterns’ might be valuable to *them* as a humiliation, but was of no use to the *sick*. Camillus returned to Rome and Santo Spirito: he continued to serve the patients, to read their souls, and to cure them. “It is that *long Father*,” said one, to the astonished doctor, “who has cured me.”

The Chapter met, attended by twenty-nine Religious, on April 24, 1596. Camillus put his point of view. "Even if the Bull and the Rules," he said, "do not explicitly mention 'total service', I, as founder, must know what was my intention from the outset." "But," he was answered, "this interpretation cannot be imposed without the approval of the Professed." "But as a matter of fact the Bull and the Rules in reality do speak of it . . . in words clearer than the sun. . . . I am afraid it is you who will not understand them." Deeply saddened by having to disagree with one they so much loved and venerated, the Chapter suggested the examination of these documents by four theologians, two chosen by him, two by themselves—yes, and he could add a fifth, whom he might especially trust. Camillus having 'much masticated' the proposal, agreed. His own theologians assured him that his argument was untenable. Camillus asked the Pope to suspend the decision arrived at by this method, and the Pope did so. On May 3, four Consultors were elected (this was the proper procedure), and obliged Camillus to take no decision save after listening to them. Camillus sighed that "the sons had so tied their Father's hands", and again applied to Clement. But the Pope meanwhile had heard that the Chapter and the Cardinal Protector himself, Salviati, were opposed to him: Clement gave no authoritative interpretation of the rule but told Camillus to accept no new hospitals for the future. This did not at all relieve Camillus of his most sincere scruple; but he dissolved the Chapter, saying with much simplicity that "Our Lord the Pope has given me to understand that he does not wish more hospitals to be undertaken in the fashion that would be conformable to my new (!) intention. But the sick are to be served day and night as hitherto, or in a way that shall seem better to our Order: so that this controversy is ended—for now; and all that

remains is that each should salvage his soul for the future, as I myself shall do." He felt, somewhat later, that he could ask them to give him a little more liberty: they did so, but not quite so generously as he would have liked. He said that they really might have shown "a little more confidence in him, who had shed so many tears in establishing the Order"; then, kneeling down, he begged their pardon for all the faults of his past government—"we are all weak and make mistakes—but none of mine have proceeded from bad will . . . and I hope that for the future I may place myself in all and through all entirely in the hands of my companions (the Consultors), and not trust any more in my personal opinion as perhaps I have done in the past." They went, full of gratitude and peace, to obtain the Pope's blessing, which he gave with pleasure redoubled because peace reigned amongst them. The end, however, was not yet: and a sorrow of a different sort befell him, in the death of St. Philip Neri, May 26; Camillus assisted the aged man in this his last journey, and maybe the memory of past disagreements, ending in so perfect a reconciliation, encouraged him to feel that somehow, in God's good time, the present deep division of sentiment would be substantially, and not only superficially, healed. Camillus, in reality sad at heart, went back to work at Santo Spirito harder than ever, determined to fulfil at least in himself what seemed to him to be undoubtedly God's will, however inexplicably his companions might not realise it. He loved that hospital: it was, said he, his 'garden' where he was so happy—and indeed they noticed how he was always "fresh and cheerful in charity." He regarded it, in short, as the General's privilege to work at just those cases that terrified the paid servants or even some of his own Religious. "These are my Lords and Masters", he kept saying: "it is an honour to serve them". Or better still—"These are my Lord and

Master—what joy to serve *Him*!” “This must be the refreshment, the comfort and the quiet of our souls—as befits Religious, chosen and vowed to minister to the Sick”. And God gave Him at once a new chance of thus serving Him.

A mysterious ‘pestilent fever’ broke out in Rome, and especially in the Borgo, close to Santo Spirito. The Pope ordered the various Cardinals to cater for the sick in their respective neighbourhoods, reserving to himself that specially foul district extending from the Trastevere right across to Monte Mario. It had been intended to drain the low-lying parts of this properly, but this had not been done, and the Vatican itself remained extremely unhealthy. The Pope entrusted this to Camillus, and gave him a new house in the Borgo, equipped with all necessities and the service of doctors. But hospitals could not hold all the sick: and the infinite labour of visiting each house, nay, the huts of shepherds and the ovens in which men hid, began again. Happily, this sort of work, which exhausted others, was precisely what gave new strength to Camillus, who wilted when there was not enough to do. We read of sick men, or their messengers, refusing to leave the doors of the Maddalena till some Father should return, and then they would forthwith ask him to start out again. No wonder that one poor priest, snatching a moment of sleep, was roused at least sufficiently to get up, dress, go forth to the place to which he was summoned, and walked reeling through the streets, once more fast asleep, till some soldier woke him up properly. He had no idea how he had got there. And more than once that happened, of which we have so many well-attested instances in our own time—Priests were summoned, or even escorted, by unknown visitors, to some dying man, who, in his complete loneliness had been unable to invoke human aid. I have known too many cases where priests

have thus been summoned in no 'natural' way, to the bedside of the dying, to have any doubt but that God permitted the same to happen, and often, during these ancient plagues. This was in July 1597. The same could be said about alms. His religious complained vigorously to Camillus that he was neglecting the affairs of his Order in general, and the feeding and health of his own men in particular. He agreed: he said that during a crisis like this one, everything must be subordinated to the service of the sick, and that God would not fail men of Faith. Nor did He. Alms poured in: sometimes Camillus even sent back large sums that he thought must have been given by mistake. But possibly he had to learn also that a Founder must legislate not only for men like himself, but for the more average: and, that a Superior must at times deny himself the joy of doing direct work for God, and sit at desks, give interviews to innumerable visitors, do accounts and see to the meals. Camillus knew he was very strong, but did not realise always that others were not: he was on fire with charity, and simply could not believe that others were not. In fact, being a very humble man, he ranked himself in every way below them, so that he simply could not understand how they could fail to do as much as—and more than—he did. In short, a Saint-in-the-making always has to learn, always to overcome something in himself, probably till the very hour of death. Thus he did not tread a path different from ours. He does but climb more steeply, and so, more quickly and more high than we.

Perhaps I had better finish once and for all with the topic of 'total service' in the hospitals. I recall that Camillus was determined that, if possible, his Religious should undertake the *entire* care of hospitals where they worked and in which they were to live. Nearly all his men were against this, the main arguments, I recall, being

that it was absurd to withdraw these men (especially when priests) from the direct care spiritual and material of the sick, and put them to scrub floors etc. which others would do better: and, that it would be almost impossible to prevent men who did the 'total' work of a hospital from wanting to have some share in its management. Early in 1599 Opertis came to Rome to discuss possible compromises, and with extreme audacity suggested that the Institute should be divided—some should adopt Camillus's conditions; the others, continue as at present. It has been suggested that Opertis, a daring diplomat, suggested this to *force* Camillus to see that no one would follow him. Well, Camillus was ready to tolerate even that. On May 12 the 2nd Chapter was opened, presided over by Mgr. Tarugi, nominated by the Cardinal Protector and approved by the Pope. Camillus at once set forth a dilemma. The original Bull spoke neither of 'total' service, nor yet of 'higher studies'. If the Chapter would not accept his ideal of 'total service' and quoted the silence of the Bull, then *he* would withdraw his sanction of 'higher studies' which the members of the Institute wished for. If, as Founder, he could permit the studies, similarly, as Founder, he could impose 'total service'. Frankly, as Fr. Vanti notes, the two things were not parallel. Camillus, as Founder, could set forth his ideals and a programme (and even new ones): but he had no right to *impose* any of them: they had to be known, discussed, and freely consented to by all.¹ The case was submitted to Camillus's great friend, Cardinal Baronius. The Cardinal could not but decide against the Founder. He, though "wounded in the very pupil of his eye", submitted the matter to two theologians along with Tarugi. They leant to the side

¹ It is quite probable that a Religious of another Order, who disliked the Institute and wished to injure it, deliberately urged Camillus towards an obstinate insistence on his idea, hoping that thus he would destroy the Institute itself.

of the Chapter at large, and Tarugi, sorry for Camillus, went to the Pope and tried to find a decision in some sort in favour of Camillus. But the representatives of the Chapter went too, and protested that their rights were being over-ridden. Clement VIII was at first very annoyed and said that Tarugi must be obeyed. Tarugi remained behind, and implored the Pope, personally, to let Camillus alone, since the Institute was doing more good than "any of the old religious orders." The Pope was touched, the more so because a few days later the Duke of Savoy, plague having broken out in Piedmont, petitioned the Pope to send eight priests and seven brothers (Camillans) to the rescue. Everyone, Camillus at their head, implored to be sent. The Pope saw that there was no ill will in the Institute—no question of its having relaxed its first fervour. He told Tarugi to try to do all he could to arrive at what would satisfy both the Father and his sons. The Chapter was so overjoyed at the evident trust put in it by the Holy Father, that on August 9 the Chapter dissolved itself, leaving (we have to confess) the main point undecided, but having done much good work of other sorts.¹

For a time, Camillus, resolute to succeed in his designs, turned wholly to penance, prayer, and harder work. The year 1600 arrived with its solemn Jubilee; French pilgrims were pouring into Rome because of the conversion of Henri IV and peace between France and Spain; conversions multiplied—Clement VII himself confirmed a nephew of Calvin's. Camillus more than ful-

¹ We can judge how almost hopeless was the work of those who would work for the sick. When the plague reached Piedmont from France, the Duke of Savoy tried to conceal the fact, so that the Asti 'fair' could take place, because Turin merchants poured thither and brought much money with them. The result was that the plague, unchecked, made its way to Turin, Mondovì, Monferrato, Asti and many other towns. Thus the Duke, having left the tap running as long as he could, then, unable to turn it off, sent for the poor Camillans to arrive with mops.

filled the Jubilee regulations, making again and again the prescribed visits to the great basilicas, over appalling roads, and consenting to use a stick only when his leg was too horribly painful. He won his reward. Opertis drew up a long 'formula', in which Camillus's desire for 'total work' was acceded to, *except* as regards heavier, purely material occupations which could be far better carried out by seculars. Camillus abruptly agreed. His Religious were therefore to be permitted to live in the hospitals themselves 'as though in their own house', but, were not to undertake the 'heavy work' that did not befit their state of life. Such work was later defined in Clement's Bull, which in no way therefore 'reformed' the Institute but made more explicit the way in which Camillus's original idea could be developed and stabilised. The 'Formula' was submitted to the various houses, and accepted. But one last storm remained to be weathered.

Certain Roman malcontents, though they had agreed to and signed the Formula, began to criticise it and appealed to Salviati who entrusted an enquiry to a certain Mgr. Benaglia. Unhappily, this prelate had a grudge against Camillus who, long ago, had refused to mitigate, at Benaglia's request, a penance he had imposed upon a Religious. Benaglia suddenly produced a decree, allegedly "by order of the Holy Father", forbidding the admission of any more novices, or the profession of any more Religious, or the ordination of those even who had been professed. . . St. Ignatius had once said that he thought that should the Company of Jesus be suppressed, after a quarter of an hour's prayer his soul would remain serene. Camillus accepted at once, interiorly, the destruction of his own Institute, but entrusted its defence to Fr. Profeta, and himself went off to serve the plague-stricken at Nola. His sons resisted this departure in vain: the Saint actually thought that if he died, his death might

be accepted as a sacrifice for the survival and well-being of his Institute.

Conditions at Nola were terrible. "The dead, since there was no one who would bury them, were murdering the living". Many priests had died; some had fled; others, in Rome for the Jubilee, dared not return. Again and again, some solitary Camillan had to visit a sick man, try to cure him, give him the Last Sacraments, and then carry him forth and bury him. Camillus had promised not to stay there long, and felt he had kept that promise by going to Naples, collecting eighty Professed Fathers (for whom lots were drawn—they all wanted to go), and bringing them back to Nola. But Rome decided that Camillus must not be allowed to prolong this second escapade, and he went back to Naples. Meanwhile the fame of this Camillan heroism spread wide abroad: the bishop of Nola himself was in Rome for the Jubilee. The Pope asked him why he was not with his flock; he said that it was in the hands of Camillus—"a far more charitable shepherd than I am", and in fact not only wrote to Camillus several times, but appointed him his Vicar General with full powers alike spiritual and over the material possessions of the diocese. Camillus however was not allowed to go back there: the seven Fathers originally sent there, however, all caught the plague and most of the others died: Camillus reserved to himself the right of nursing them: none the less, five of those seven died. For the second time, plague had saved the Institute. The Pontiff ordered a revision of Benaglia's decree by a Mgr. Seneca who studied the 'Formula' and said that there were not "so many monstrosities in it" as Benaglia had described: the Pope caused Seneca's view to be submitted to Salviati and Baronius who implored that it should be approved: and on December 28, 1600, Clement issued a Bull, *Superna Dispositione*, confirming the

Formula, though making its contents obligatory only as from the promulgation of the Bull. But all the older Fathers voluntarily accepted the contents of the Formula now papally approved. Four 'simple' vows were added to the four 'solemn' ones; of these, one re-affirmed that the Camillans, even when living in a hospital, must not accept its governorship or administration. Camillus cannot be said to have been fully contented with the Bull, and found it easier to carry out the substance of his plan in Florence, where he received an enthusiastic welcome, and at Mantua, whither Duke Vincent Gonzaga had invited him.

I now return to a rapid sketch of the development of the Institute from a rather earlier date. The *focus* of all its activity and development was, of course, Camillus himself. He wished that his Religious should rest a little after three hours' work: but he disregarded this rule in his own case: directly after Mass he would go to Santo Spirito, receive a written account of the arrival of new patients and the condition of those already there: he inspected the kitchen—he was a very good cook and loved cooking small delicacies for fastidious or convalescent persons—then he looked after the worst cases till dinner time when he returned to the Maddalena; then, after prayer and doing necessary business, he went back to the Hospital and remained there often all night, always regarding as his prerogative the worst cases, feeding, for instance, as best he could, those whose mouths and throats were helpless for eating.

As for 'necessary business'—well, it must be difficult to manage a house when a Saint is its Superior! Camillus, of course, was *quite sure* that God would never allow His servants to starve; so he regarded the poor as his immediate care; anything *extra* (if anything *could* be extra, given the conditions of poverty then prevalent) might go to feeding

the Community—poor men, they were often appalled, not having ‘heroic faith’ all of them and all the time ! Certainly, alms flowed in. Often they were anonymous. More than once, when a benefactor sent his regular contribution, the sum turned out much in excess : Camillus sent it back, assuming that a mistake had been made. If it had, the benefactor was touched, and told Camillus to keep the surplus : once, a man who helped Camillus monthly by the gift of the rent of a certain house, left an envelope which turned out to contain 300 gold *scudi*. Camillus sent the money back, saying that they were not in so great a need as the donor said he had heard they were. The gentleman again returned the money, scenting a miracle, for his purse had contained, he knew, only the normal rent—a very small sum, and none of it in gold. But these events are almost normal in the lives of the Saints of Charity !

In 1597–1598, the Institute established itself at Bologna, whither after a short time Camillus went himself, by way of Loreto, so as to be absent during the discussions belonging to that moment about his ideal of a “total” hospital service. Thence he went to Milan, partly to see whether the Fathers there approved of his ideas. On all these journeys, he always insisted that some small money and plenty of bread should be carried with him and his companions, that they might help the poor whom they might meet. Perhaps a word is necessary about this ‘indiscriminate charity’ and the ‘undeserving poor’. Apart from the fact that a Christian’s greatest joy (not to mention that of the Angels . . .) is to bring back the ‘undeserving’, whether rich or poor, to the love of Christ and of their fellow-men, we have to recall that Camillus lived in a certain sort of society which he could not have altered fundamentally so that there should be no more very poor, even had he wanted to. Not only he was not a

social-economic philosopher; not only would his learned treatises on human inequality and injustices, had he been able to write any, have had not the slightest effect on his period, but, to put it in the way most likely to offend modern ideas, he would have felt himself 'out of work' had there been no poor, no sick, to attend to. Where would he have found 'Christ-Suffering' to serve? To state my own opinion bluntly, Camillus had an infinitely easier task than ours. I do not foresee a world without poverty, and certainly not without suffering, bodily or mental. And I consider it vastly more degrading for a very poor man to demand sustenance, as his right, from the 'State', than to hope for it, as an act of loving service, from some humble individual. As for the sick, in a country where official care for health has been developed to an extremely high degree, you may see as many neurotics and mentally half-sick as anywhere else. Where nursing has become a profession instead of being a vocation, you will *not* get that spiritual contact between nurse or doctor and patient which is infinitely more important than administration of drugs. Along with the crudest materialist, I believe that physical well-being ought to be aimed at: along with those who profess to believe that the body is illusion, I am sure that spiritual well-being should be sought. But I am certain that so long as one without the other is sought, chaos will be the result. And experience, not theory only, has convinced me that the Catholic way of starting a 'cure' by way of the spirit (I don't allude, obviously, to what is surgical, like cutting off a leg . . . or the administration of e.g. morphia at moments when pain is going to prove too much for one's heart) is the right one. Anyway, since Camillus could not live 400 years ahead of his time, what was to be done for men and women who were destitute, even if not ill (though they practically all were and could not but

be)? Put them all into a lethal chamber had it been possible, as men have now been doing when those who differ from them politically or racially require to be dealt with? Disregard the suffering individual for the sake of a philosophy however correct, yet at the moment impotent? No. Camillus did perfectly right in dealing with individuals when and where he found them, even if he could help for a day only or for an hour.

Camillus too had his accidents. He was both tender and brusque. He always shook up straw mattresses and turned pillows that no one else would touch. Once he did so too roughly and the absurd knob that crowned the canopy which surmounted a bed, fell down and wounded the head of the patient. Surgeons could not heal the wound: Camillus stayed the night with the sick man, and next day the wound, which had bled terribly, was perfectly healed (and the patient had not been annoyed). Again, leaning over a man, he allowed his iron crucifix to fall on the patient's head. But at once, at his prayer, the wound, and the sickness bodily and spiritual, of the sufferer were healed. Tarugi himself says that Camillus, 'excessive' in his charity towards the sick, *seemed* austere and rigid when rebuking the faults of others (i.e. his own Religious). The point here is, that Camillus, who had fifteen more years to live, was not yet the perfected Saint. He saw clearly that he must have the heart that was like Christ's Heart in regard of all who suffered spiritually or physically. But he did not yet realise that those who had—as sincerely as he had—dedicated themselves to the service of the sick, could possibly see themselves as incapable of the superhuman exertions that came—by now—'natural' to himself. Hence, so far, there was not a perfect harmony in Camillus's soul; but there was going to be.

Meanwhile, ever new claims on his charity were being made. At Christmas, 1598, torrential rains caused the Tiber to overflow: this event was so frequent (the last flood was only seven years ago) that it seems incredible that authority had not concerned itself more definitely with a remedy. Camillus insisted on having the sick in Santo Spirito transported to a higher floor: he spent all Christmas night carrying them higher still, in spite of the appalling pain that this caused to his leg: in the Maddalena the water had risen above the high altar itself. Camillus got two boats, and rowed around, rescuing unfortunates marooned in upper storeys. When the water subsided, a whole new category of sick, of homeless, of orphans besieged even the hospitals: Camillus worked there all night: when he returned to the Maddalena in the morning, he would first visit the sick there, then sit down in the infirmary, leaning his head on his hand, for a short time, and consider he had 'slept' enough. Then he made his meditation, said Mass, and returned to his work.

In this same year and a little later the Institute was earnestly invited to Madrid: but the enterprise, at the time, came to nothing. Houses were however opened at Florence (much helped by the B. Ippolito Galantini), at Ferrara, and at Messina, and then at Palermo. Camillus meanwhile was travelling around—to Bucchianico and Loreto, to Assisi, and thence to Florence, after which he went to Bologna and Ferrara; thence to Venice, and Padua, Mantua, Cremona and finally Milan. In all these places he studied the hospitals, and not only made suggestions, as a rule a thankless task, but tried to learn. He was always seeking to improve his methods. Finally, he came to Genoa, and it was there that he heard of Mgr. Benaglia's attempt to make an end of the Institute, and after this, the episode of Nola occurred. When the Bull was published he felt he had better re-visit the various houses

to give them a *viva voce* explanation of it, and thus he found himself for the first time visiting Sicily where he had not been since 1573—how different a man! Then, the gambler-soldier had to return to Italy destitute: to-day, the Viceroy, Duke of Macheda, would not speak to him otherwise than bare-headed. Enthusiastic crowds flocked out to meet him, dogged his steps, tried to kiss his hand, demanded miracles, or, failing these, ‘just one word’. All this was anguish to the Saint, who, in proportion as his sanctity increased, saw ever more clearly the gulf between the highest human holiness, and God’s all holiness, source of every grace. On escaping from Palermo, he fled to Messina, where he found rest, indeed, ‘new life’, serving in the hospital. “His cheerfulness made the whole hospital cheerful”—it appears that he even made jokes. Thence to Naples and Rome, where he proposed new work in yet other hospitals: his consultors would not approve this suggestion, being anxious to consolidate what existed: however, they referred it to the next General Chapter. Camillus did not insist, but went off to Florence, where more than anywhere else he could always work to his heart’s content. Passing through, once more, the cities we have already named, he received a summons back to Rome, where a General Chapter was to take place. It was in fact opened on April 15, 1602; and by a strange chance, Cardinal Salviati died next day. All differences of opinion had long ago been forgotten: Camillus assisted the Cardinal through his last hours.

Odd as it may seem, Mgr. Benaglia presided, papally approved. The Chapter lasted a week, and is passed over in Fr. Vanti’s *Life* in a single paragraph, so far as its *agenda* are concerned. The ‘salient point’ was Camillus’s desire to be exempted from all interference in the government of his Institute—not even the consultors were to control him. Naturally Benaglia was

vehemently opposed to this, which may be the reason why such of the Fathers who themselves did not like the suggestion (Opertis chief among them) came round, and approved of it during a session when Benaglia was not there. He prophesied the ruin of the Institute, and retired. In general, one would have thought that the conferring of absolute authority on one man was dangerous, and that this universal responsibility would be too much for anyone. However, the case was not general, but particular, seeing that the 'autocrat' was Camillus. But I am not surprised that Fr. Vanti, after telling us that Camillus soon set out on a tour of all his houses, introduces a section concerning the 'spirit of the Founder'.

If I may venture an opinion, it is, that Camillus *knew* that he possessed the spirit of supernatural charity and faith which he wanted to be that too of his Institute, and was afraid that others—however excellent both as men and as Religious—might fall short in it. Soon after the end of the Third Chapter General, Fr. Profeta and Br. Curzio Lodi, "who had been with him since the beginning", died. These had fully understood one another: Camillus may have felt that it would soon be his turn—he lived however for over ten years more. Camillus, in any case, displayed, during these months of journeying, a power of organisation that one might not have foreseen. His instructions as to the training of novices are very practical. He himself could display a sort of objective mysticism which is very interesting: here is a sort of symbolic instance. One summer day he was crossing the bridge of Sant' Angelo to Santo Spirito with a young novice whose head ached violently in the heat. "Come closer to me", said the towering Saint: "I am very tall, and my shadow will keep the sun off you". I like this sentence, which, to me, is full of a rather naïf humour and unconscious mysticism. Anyhow, the boy walked in the shadow

of Camillus, who, on his side, tried not to go too fast. Not but what Camillus could be very direct. When leaving Genoa, he went to the hospital to say goodbye to his community and the staff. Camillus asked for a Fr. Testa, and, since Testa was saying Mass, waited for him. When he arrived, Camillus put his hand on his shoulder, "Come along, Father Stefano; we have to go to heaven, and we must prepare for that!" Stefano Testa was perfectly well; all the same, ten days later, he died. Another time, Camillus was about to leave Naples for Rome with some companions. One of these said he was ill and that the doctor had forbidden him to travel. Camillus saw deeper into the priest's character, which was timorous and indolent. "That", said he, "is what the doctor has ordered: right! But Obedience orders you a hat and a couple of spurs; you will take these and forthwith leave with me, to-morrow". All went well.

In October, 1602, Camillus returned to the Milan Hospital where more than anywhere else he found both peace and charity—the peace that charity creates. And at once, a quaint and illuminative little incident. On arriving, without even taking off his travelling boots, he went straight to the beds occupied by two young English Protestants, travelling-companions, who had had a fight and wounded one another. It was impossible that Camillus should have heard about this; but at once he said: "My brothers, how can it be that you, who are companions and such good friends, have struck one another? And why don't you believe in God?" Perhaps they had drifted away even from orthodox Protestantism! Anyhow, Camillus made peace between them and finally reconciled them with the Church. In fact, Milan became his ideal hospital; Florence and Ferrara were almost as perfect: while at Milan he made a few new simple rules full of common sense, and underlining the absolute

obedience due to the doctors: the Camillans must never forget that they were *nurses*, and should do what they were told. Their personal contribution must be a *total charity*. "A Servant of the Sick", he repeated, "without charity is simply a fish out of water!"

We now enter upon an interval of four years, 1603 to 1607, when Camillus resigned the Generalate. A full Life of the Saint (like Fr. Vanti's) would of course dutifully relate every available detail of that period; but for my part I should find it impossible to do so if I am to keep this little book within reasonable limits, though every episode has some picturesque or characteristic that could be quoted. For example, half the journeys undertaken by Camillus seemed to involve him in some accident—if he was in a carriage, the horses ran away, or a wheel went over the edge of a precipice, or a bridge was rotten: if he was on a mule or on horseback, the animal fell on the appalling roads—usually on the poor man's bad leg: again and again only at the last moment would he and his companions find a lodging for the night, when they had resigned themselves to await the dawn in rain or snow. But worse than this were the constant money-difficulties in which this or that house was involved: the Institute seemed quite unable to avoid running up debts. And worse still were the continual difficulties connected with the service of the sick in hospitals, and these were grievous precisely in proportion as that service approximated to Camillus's ideal of 'totality'. In 1604, the Consultors decided that the Milan Hospital must be given up—it was impossible to find a decent house for the Community, or a church where they could regularly say Mass. In the end, a compromise was arrived at, as Cardinal Frederic Borromeo was so hurt by the proposed departure. But a more radical reason for misunderstandings was the jealousy of the legal

administrators of various hospitals, in regard of these men who certainly did all the hard work, and could hardly but be supposed to be aiming at the control of the administration too. Some time later, in fact, the Camillans had to leave Florence by order of Ferdinand de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, whose mind had been poisoned against them. I fear that I cannot but think that jealousy was not solely and always the cause of irritation. Allowing for human nature, which certainly survived in some members of a large Institute like that of the Servants of the Sick (large, because novices kept pouring into it), I feel that *some* of its members may at times have appeared officious, critical, and even interfering. They themselves must often have been driven almost frantic by governors who were incompetent, indolent, or even venal. Speaking as an 'outsider', it seems to me that the only method which would ultimately prove satisfactory was that the Camillans should possess and administer the hospitals in which they served. Nowadays, when hospitals are more and more 'secularised', such a system seems even necessary. In fact, the exact opposite to Camillus's difficulty seems to have arisen—in State Hospitals, it may be impossible for Religious to play any part at all: we are thankful when there is a Catholic chaplain officially appointed, and doubly grateful when the Hospital records (as English military hospitals do) the fact that a new arrival is a Catholic, so that the Chaplain knows at once whom to visit. But when a hospital is definitely Catholic, and served and managed by Religious, difficulties constantly arise—unless extraordinary tact be shown—if non-Catholic nurses are admitted as, for example, probationers, and do much very hard work, but have no say in the administration whatsoever. I think a compromise, or concordat, might well be arrived at. Let there, certainly, be Catholic hospitals, owned and managed by

Religious (men or women), under the spiritual control, of course, of the Bishop, and regularly inspected by the State so that on the material side the standard of work done in them may be kept sufficiently high. Probably we shall see something of the sort happen also as regards schools, and also, private property, and even, private businesses. Meanwhile, when Camillus found that too serious difficulties arose within hospitals, he directed his own work and that of his associates to service in private houses. I cherish one remark of his—addressed, this time, to the Devil. This evil spirit was tempting a dying man. “Go away” cried the Saint: “If he has sinned, he has sinned as a *man*—a human sin; and God has forgiven him!” So the interference of the Devil was wholly out of place. Need I say that a man who had that perspective was not going to neglect the material side of service! Once, after an appalling storm, during which shipwreck seemed inevitable till Camillus started to pray and got the ship safe to port, he went straight to a church, and said Mass, and then, in no time, managed to get “soup, meat, bread, wine and fruit” for the whole crew of 300 persons. On the spiritual side, he was able to install the Blessed Sacrament in a chapel within the Naples Annunziata Hospital, which provoked criticism as an innovation, but was manifestly at once a joy, and prudent, in case Viaticum was suddenly needed for some very sick man. It is interesting to see how slow were the Roman authorities to allow the Camillans “total service” in the Eternal City, even in Santo Spirito. As a matter of fact, the responsibilities they had already undertaken would seem to have been amply sufficient, if not too heavy, especially as in 1604 Camillus developed a grave illness of the kidneys, and stone. This added enormously to his sufferings, and to the anxieties of his associates. It is then doubly touching to read of his kindness to animals, for instance, to a dog that had hurt

its leg. "I cannot walk either, at present", he said: "this is a creature of God, and I, ungrateful man that I am, ought to learn fidelity to my Lord from the faithfulness of this dog to his master."

At the end of this year, he was earnestly invited to open a house at Bucchianico, which later on he did, and also at Chieti.

On March 4, 1605, Clement VIII died, a terrible loss for Camillus, a loss destined to be mitigated, it might have been thought, by the accession of Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici as Leo XI; he had known Camillus well in Florence. But he died twenty-six days after his election, having just had time to summon Camillus and assure him of his good will. On May 16, Cardinal Camillo Borghese became Pope, as Paul IV. He had been Vicar of Rome, and so knew Camillus well. As for Camillus, having divided his Order into five provinces, he went to Bucchianico. Marchese Marino Caracciolo, over-lord of the town, gave Camillus an old palace of his for dwelling, and the University undertook to provide quite a large sum, in instalments, to support the Religious. The palace needed much adaptation. One day Camillus was sitting at dinner with his cousin Onofrio, when he turned white and seemed appalled, then recovered himself, and said: "God be praised". At that moment a young man rushed in—a whole wall of the building had collapsed, burying the workmen. "It will be nothing," said Camillus. "Come, Father, and help them!" cried the youth. Camillus went, and indicated certain spots where excavation should begin. The young man said that the buried workmen could not possibly be there—he had been present at the disaster. Camillus insisted, and there they all were, uninjured, save one, who had had a knock on the head—and *he*, that morning, had been grumbling against the Saint. The event cannot be disputed, whatever view we take of

'second sight' in general and this instance of it; and, as a cautionary tale, what more satisfactory? Here are two more incidents, that have, for me, their charm. The water supply was bad. The new house had a cistern, which caught rain-water, but this must be filtered through a sandy soil called 'pozzolana'. There was none of this at Bucchianico: it had to be fetched from over ten miles away. Camillus, however, was looking at some ants, throwing up their little hills of dust. "But what *is* this earth?" asked he. It was genuine pozzolana, and exactly enough of it could be dug up to make a useful filter. The second incident is this. Camillus decided to visit some surviving relatives a considerable distance from Chieti. He took with him an old Brother, Orazio, and an escort of three men, lent to him (together with horses), by Onofrio. On the way, of course, Orazio's horse fell and rolled on the poor old man. They all thought he was dead. Camillus dismounted, blessed him, and Orazio sat up, shook himself, and was perfectly well. On arriving at the Capuchin convent where they had meant to stay, they were warmly welcomed, but there was next to nothing to eat. "There *will* be," said Camillus calmly: "God will help us." The three servants were taken to the refectory, and were given a few crusts of bread, some salad and some soup. They lamented having to "sacrifice a good deal of their formidable appetite", and altogether lost hope when presented with a glass of water—there was no wine. They resolved not to drink at all, "unless owing to extreme necessity and at the end of the meal". Camillus came in and blessed the food. They ate and ate, till even their formidable appetite was satisfied. "Alack," they cried, that we cannot anoint our food with a little wine!" One of them resolved to drink—and lo, it *was* wine. The others then drank, and found it "good as malvoisie and—spirited". It took a great deal to persuade the

Brother who had served them that it *was* wine. "If," said he, "I poured it from this jug, it *must* be water." Well, they not only drank till they "were tired of it", but left some in the cups as a proof of the miracle.

Camillus then went back to Naples, taking a grand-nephew with him as novice, though the boy's relatives highly disapproved of this step. In short, Camillus was only intermittently in favour within his family.

In March 1606, Paul V assigned Cardinal Ginnasi to be the new Protector of the whole Camillan institute. In June broke out the appalling plague of Naples which lasted till the spring of 1607. In the single hospital of the Annunziata, twenty-five to thirty patients died each day: Camillus did all he could with disinfectants; but half the staff had fled, half was sick . . . the reek of decaying corpses filled not only the hospital but the city. Most of Camillus's own men caught the infection: several of them died—including the young Ottavio de Lellis, his grand-nephew, still a novice. In the midst of all this, the crisis in the hospital of Sta Maria Nova at Florence came to a head. Sooner than see his hospital work stultified there, Camillus withdrew all his men, and put them to work in private houses, rather startlingly asserting that the Grand Duke would not survive for more than two years and fifteen days. This prophecy, which was undoubtedly made, was verified to the letter.

I have asked myself whether we can detect, about this time, a slight touch of 'feverishness', so to say, in Camillus's activities. He enquired from the famous theologian (afterwards Cardinal) Toledo whether his vow of 'serving the sick' did not oblige him to serve them in some measure *daily*. Would one day on which he did not actively serve them, constitute a breach of that vow? And undoubtedly his burning zeal led him to ask more from himself and his companions than they could per-

form, and debts were mounting up. Cardinal Ginnasi feared lest "so important an Institute might collapse owing to its desire to do *too well*". The Pope asked the Cardinal to talk it over with Camillus, who was called to Rome. Camillus's decision was drastic: he would resign from the Generalate and live wholly under obedience. Ginnasi suggested convening the Consultors and Provincials and discussing this proposal. Camillus, distressed, said nothing to his colleagues, but went to the Pope twice: the Pope would not decide, but referred the matter again to the Cardinal Protector. On October 2 the Fathers were assembled, and after some affectionate words spoken by the Cardinal, Camillus offered his resignation, and the Cardinal said sorrowfully but definitely that he had the Pope's authority to accept it. Camillus then begged pardon for faults committed during his tenure of office, and confessed that they—if any—arose from mistaken zeal; his aim had always been the glory of God and charity to the sick. He added, that he was convinced he must die soon, and wished to spend his last remaining days in preparing for a good death, and in obedient charitable work. So far, he felt, he never had *obeyed*! He had founded: he had governed; he had worked—but on his own initiative. The resignation was accepted though with many tears, and Fr. Opertis was appointed 'Vicar' of the Institute.

We can say definitely that for the creation of the Institute and for its preservation on the loftiest level of self-sacrifice, an extraordinary man had been needed. Camillus, like all founders of great Religious Orders, had been extraordinary. But there comes a moment when such an Order is firmly established, and then something less than the extraordinary is needed for its enduring welfare. Camillus had given full example of the 'extraordinary'; yet, at the same time, he led an absolutely

normal life in such matters as concerned the external life of the house where he was—he ate normally; he refused even the least ‘special’ privilege or distinction: at recreation, he made jokes and played *piastrelle* (a sort of marbles) when invited to, though he liked older priests to be present too. In fact, a young novice who wrote his letters for him, and from time to time felt a little irritated by his work, grumbled to himself asking why everyone called Camillus a Saint “though he drinks, eats, sleeps, and talks like the rest of us and does everything else like the rest of us”. Camillus read his thoughts and laughed gently at him. The young man must have been rather obtuse, because it is evident that Camillus was *not* ‘like the rest’ of them: at the same time, it is important to see that the Saints *have* an ‘ordinary’ side to them. They are not *afraid* of their own ‘nature’, which grace does not destroy however much it uplifts and ‘supernaturalises’ it. However, I hope to try to picture Camillus’s character at the end of this little book, though I should much prefer the mere story of his life to have done that of itself. It is dangerous to risk an opinion upon the personality of any man: but ten times more so, when the man is a Saint.

II

Camillus, therefore, had governed the Institute that he had created for sixteen years: when he resigned his Generalate, it numbered 242 professed Religious, and 80 novices, distributed among fifteen houses and eight hospitals. Moreover, at least 170 had died in the exercise of their special vocation. I must now try to describe the ‘last few days’ that remained to him, which lasted, as a matter of fact, for seven years. I confess to being beset by a certain difficulty.—Just as after his request to be

allowed a free hand and to be independent of his Consultors I cannot see that he *acted* in any more autocratic way, so now, when he had abdicated the Generalship, his successor, Opertis, and the Consultors, did all they could to give him an exceptional position as *Founder*. A circular letter addressed to all Superiors declared that Camillus must be allowed to live in whatever house or hospital he pleased; that he had authority over every Superior save Opertis himself; that he must be supported in all his enterprises, and might fulfil the obligations of the Rule “as he found it to be convenient”. Camillus undoubtedly intended to make use of none of these privileges, and refused precedence whenever he could, and so forth; but in the concrete, he seems to me to have acted with much liberty, and continued to appal his associates by his indifference to debts, and his devouring zeal and overwork. I have to insist yet once more that *if* Camillus had not been filled with a heroic spirit of faith and of unlimited charity, his more cautious associates would have been in the right. As it was, nearly all of them *recognised* the fount and origin of his spiritual life and of his energies, and not only loved Camillus, but venerated him. Opertis was a very cautious man! He certainly tried to curb the ‘exorbitant’ Saint; but he never made any mistake about his loveliness or holiness. I would like to register my high veneration for Fr. Opertis, who seems to me to have acquitted himself of his terribly difficult task superlatively well. He had to rebuke—or at least to resist the wishes of the man whom beyond all others he loved and venerated: he had to call upon prudence (which after all is a ‘cardinal virtue’!) to keep charity in bounds—I quote Fr. Vanti textually, lest I be thought rash in saying even so much as I have—Opertis had “ancora una volta, dinanzi alle difficoltà enormi che sovrastavano, tentato di porre un argine alle *straripanti attività* del nostro

Santo". I cannot but recall the struggles that Fr. Nadal, S.J., had with St. Francis Borgia! Perhaps it is worth remembering that the Renaissance was a period of *extremes*, and, oddly enough, that the extremes understood one another! Thus Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga of Mantua said (and, I am convinced, *meant*) that when he heard Camillus speak, he seemed to see and hear (or feel) the spirit of St. Paul . . . so full was he of the Holy Spirit. Yet Vincent was, judging exteriorly, a most horrible young man. The only person to whom he submitted in his family quarrels was his cousin St. Aloysius Gonzaga; and, foreseeing he would have to submit, did all he could not to meet that adamant and wholly imperturbable youth. It is true that most of these elegant and ferocious, adulterous and devout tyrants were assassinated: but, between whiles, they knew perfectly well what the Saints of their generation were talking about. *Our* generation is ugly, not elegant; tame (or barbarian), not hotly ferocious; certainly no less adulterous but in no way so devout, and cannot even begin to understand what being a 'Saint' means. But then, and let us hope now, there are a few 'prudent' and levelheaded men who both act with 'caution' *and* realise into what 'extravagances' the whirling flood of Charity may sweep a Saint.

Camillus therefore now spent some time at Santo Spirito, largely engaged in fighting against sleepiness, for he wished never to sleep for more than three or at most four hours in the twenty-four. Then he went to Buchianico, where, not unexpectedly, the University found that it could not keep its financial promises. Nor was Onofrio—a careful if not (too readily named, I think) a miserly man, prepared to help his kinsman. Thence (after the usual travelling accidents and astonishing assistance from unknown persons who appeared, put things right, and disappeared, so that they were easily

surmised to be angels and very likely were), he went to Naples, where Opertis had found that, after all, the work in the Annunziata hospital need not be given up. At Naples, he did all he could to be treated as a man without privileges: indeed, he refused to take part in the fourth General Chapter. He spent all the time he could in the hospital, and with children; nursing the smallest ones 'as if they had been the Baby Jesus'; teaching the rather older ones their Pater and Ave; and making use whenever he could of Bellarmine's Catechism, of which indeed he wished each of his Religious to have a copy, and to learn it by heart. Faith was the first essential—and if he could not go to the Foreign Missions, he consoled himself by the certainty that his vocation had a petitionary value also for pagans and heretics—The hospitals are my India and Japan! (The phrase must have been current. Jesuits who were horrified by the state of Italy, protested against distant mission-fields. 'Italy is our India'; and so forth.) It might interest those who wonder how it will ever be possible again to get a de-Catholicised society to see the truth of the Faith, that Camillus, on his side, could not imagine how anyone could fail to appreciate the truth of the Catholic Faith, so luminous it was to him. That is perhaps not astonishing: but I well remember, in my youth, how almost impossible it was to persuade southern Catholics that 'Protestants' *could* be in good faith, as I myself had once thought about Catholics.

Camillus went to Genoa. I cherish one little anecdote because it reveals the charming illogicality of Saints —of this Saint anyhow. Camillus was determined to be obedient and exercise no more authority. He presented himself to the head infirmarian and asked what he must do. The infirmarian, who was very young felt shy of issuing commands to the Founder. He said: "Your Reverence must be where you like." "No," said Camillus: "*You* tell

me." The infirmarian assigned him an easy ward. "No," said Camillus: "*You* go there—I'll go to such and such a place," and he chose the worst of the wards. Charity apparently had taken precedence over technical obedience: besides, Camillus had realised that the young man had given him his easy job 'out of respect'. Charity was the constant theme of his talk and instructions. Like St. John's disciples, his own begged him to talk about something else sometimes.¹

In November of this year, his kinsman Onofrio died. Camillus was frankly disappointed that he made no bequest to the advantage of the Church, let alone of the Camillian Institute. Onofrio on his side had not the least intention of leaving anything save to his children: "One fool in the family is plenty," he had said. Camillus's anxiety and urging Onofrio—not in the most tactful way, it seems to me—to give him alms were due to his distress about the debts which he felt his impulsive generosity had incurred. A large bequest enabled them to be fully paid in 1622.

Camillus had no wish but to remain working at Milan; but the Cardinal Protector and the Consultors were clear that his work as Founder meant preservation and development too. They sent him to Genoa and made him Visitor

¹ In July, 1608, he went to Milan. It is here that we see an accumulation of examples revealing his interest in hygiene as such. He was determined that the wards should be kept high, full of light and air: that the beds should be properly made and kept clear of vermin—those great carriers of infection: he actually demolished certain rooms that he thought too low or damp: rather later, you find him insisting on a proper head-infirmarian—"one is worth a 1,000," he repeated, "and 1,000 are not worth one" . . . and how each patient must have a good nightcap—"so that they may not be as they are, with nothing on their head. Who knows how those poor fellows suffer, on winter mornings, being like that without anything!" Above all he is preoccupied with the humblest of all necessities: he goes into great detail, and exclaims: "God knows how many die yearly from getting up to go to those foul and reeking places!" I have left out so much that might disgust the sensitive modern ear, that I feel I should be doing Camillus an injustice if I failed to indicate how here, too, he was far ahead of his time.

of the house there. He returned to Milan; and went on to Piacenza, Mantua and Ferrara. At Milan, a characteristic incident. The Superior was out when Camillus arrived. The Saint made his visit to the Blessed Sacrament and the sick, and persuaded the porter, who seemed exhausted, to let him have the keys while the poor Brother himself went and lay down. After a while the Superior returned and knocked. Camillus did not understand the key, which turned round and round in the key-hole. The Superior grew angry: "Don't you know even how to open a door?" he shouted. Finally the door opened, and the Superior recognised the Founder. Camillus laughed, and insisted he was nothing but the Superior's very obedient son. "*Are you?*" said the Superior to himself. Some days later, he gave Camillus some new clothes to replace the deplorable rags in which he arrived. Camillus kicked against the gift. "*Are you or are you not my very obedient son?*" asked the Superior. Heaven knows what Camillus wanted to retort! But he had to crush his hands against his mouth to suppress whatever he had felt inclined to say.

At Ferrara, he heard that Opertis again proposed to set limits to the work of the Camillans in hospitals: Opertis had told Camillus to proceed from that city to Chieti and Buccianico to visit those houses too: Camillus felt that despite this order he ought to go to Rome, to stop Opertis from trying to make innovations in various towns. Some Jesuit Fathers, whose advice he asked, agreed that he should go to Rome. I do not see how Camillus was ever quite to get out of these difficulties: he was no more General, with accurately defined rights: but he *was* Founder, with manifest authority, but of no defined or definable sort. On this occasion, Opertis ended by yielding. The visit to the Abruzzo now took place; after it, Camillus returned to Santo Spirito and asked Ginnasi, and Opertis, if he might have a room in the hospital,

and spend the night there at least sometimes. The Cardinal gave him leave: Opertis (poor man—he always had to look ahead and foresee possibilities) saw—what everyone immediately would see *now*—that this isolation of Camillus might seem mysterious: people might think that he had been set aside, if not dismissed from the Institute. Camillus decided for the hospital, “though Fr. General was very reluctant to give me leave.” He stayed there from November, 1609, to the end of January, 1612, except May–September, 1610.

He was given a tiny room, which barely held a bed: a small window overlooked the yellow swirl of the Tiber. At midnight, he made his rounds: prepared food, gave medicines, talked to the sleepless. Towards dawn he went back to his room; treated his own leg; said part of the Breviary with a companion, went to confession perhaps at the Maddalena, where he said Mass and then returned to the hospital. Everyone, the hospital governing staff, doctors, men and women nurses, joined later in witnessing to the super-human impression he made on them. But these testimonies repeat themselves: would that we had more witnesses from among the sick whom he tended! But of course many of them died, and anyhow as a rule they were too poor or ‘obscure’ to be kept track of, and usually would have been far too timid to present themselves before the courts concerned with Camillus’s beatification. However, it is certain that when he entered a ward, there was a shout of welcome: the blind ended by knowing when he approached their bed. Of course, he was often insulted by new-comers, furious that they were sick: but he usually bound them by his spell of limitless charity. His fellow-Camillans naturally are enthusiastic witnesses; now and again they relate some small detail that we can fit into the mosaic-picture we must make of Camillus’s life—how he would warm a man’s feet before putting

him into bed (hot-water bottles were not yet taken for granted); how carefully he would de-louse his patients; how he would bathe them in tepid water from head to foot and then 'powder' them with aromatic herbs. Let us emphatically say that any illogicalities of behaviour, and deficiency in, e.g., prudence, simply disappeared when the eye was filled with the vision of his tremendous pity and illimitable love.

I need not say that Camillus's 'nest' at Santo Spirito was not a place where he sought his own ease nor even (as Opertis had hoped) a little needed rest. His obedience to the 'common life' consisted on the whole in what was negative—never asking for anything special. He did not see that he was abandoning it if he ate noticeably less—in fact, he took as a rule only one meal a day: his supper was a slice of bread and a glass of wine or of water. He was a little sharp about Religious who were too easy with themselves: he called them 'soft-water sailors': idle to remark that he paid no attention to cold, heat, rain or dark—I mention dark, because he had so often to go out at night through the unlit streets: they were often blocked by stones and chains: often they had holes in them: no wonder that Camillus suffered horrible accidents to his leg. It is interesting to know that he suffered intensely from thirst, and also a 'false hunger'; medical reasons connected with his ulcerated leg and kidney-disease are given for this: enough to say he refused to yield to either thirst or hunger. As for his very brief sleep, he took it, on Fridays and Saturdays, on the floor. He, at any rate, asked leave to discipline his body daily—that body which in any case was so 'afflicted' by his 'five great mercies'. Of these the first was the 'inexplicable' wound in his leg, which ended by devouring the flesh from knee to toes and going nearly quite round the calf. He lost much blood from this and it was always

suppurating. The sinews were attacked, and you could see the bone. We mentioned that this wound had begun in the left leg and then got better. But that leg never got quite better: its several small wounds ended by coalescing; and plenty of witnesses affirmed that they had never known Camillus without *two* very sick legs; and since he had to be bandaged several times daily (I, perhaps cowardly, spare my readers any detailed account of this bandaging and of the wounds), the evidence must be trusted: it is entirely that of eye-witnesses, nor does it try to make the *worst* of the case: doctors were puzzled that the frightful wound did not send Camillus's temperature up, nor produce other secondary results that they expected. Apparently when Camillus lay down, the tissues began to contract: when he rose, he could not at first put his foot to the ground: to conquer this, he stamped two or three times violently on the pavement: then, I suppose, the tissues adapted themselves, and off he went on his daily work, which might keep him on foot and moving about for several hours on end. The 'second mercy' was his rupture. Sufferers from this had to wear a heavy iron band exercising an inguinal pressure which much increased the difficulty of work. The third consisted in two large corns on the soles of his feet, which made walking an agony: he could not always do without a stick: it made him realise, said he, "that this earth is not our fatherland!" The fourth 'mercy' was his renal 'colic' and the formation of stone, which had to be dealt with by operations which to us would seem simply barbaric. Finally, for thirty months before his death, almost everything he ate made him sick. Yet in spite of all this, we have to recall three facts: first, he did more active work than several other men taken together could do; he was always cheerful and was *sought* for because of his caustically amusing conversation: and he regarded these

physical sufferings as nothing compared with the sacrifice of his *will* to God and to those superiors whom he was vowed to obey, but whose direction did not always seem to him so spiritual as it should have been. And on the top of all this, he was tormented by a certain Religious who considered himself a mystic, and that it was his duty to teach Camillus how to unite himself properly with God.

Benedict XIV declared that the word 'martyr' was sometimes loosely used about those who had suffered much, but who had not actually been killed for the Faith. He said that in his book on Canonisation he had not been able fully to approve this use, which was more suited to a panegyric than a theological work. Still, *if* the expression 'martyr of charity' was to be used at all, he could certainly have found a supreme example in the person of Camillus.

Camillus now (January-July, 1612) went home for the last time, after various other journeys on which we need not dwell. In January of 1612, he was involved in another of those incidents in which the preternatural seems to enjoy mingling itself with the humorous. In Rome, he saw several poor men at the Maddalena door. He took two by the hand, led them to the under-cook, and demanded soup and meat for each. Then he said: "Wouldn't you have liked to do as much for the others?" The cook went to the door, returned, and said there were forty-two of them. "Give them as much as the others," said the Saint. The cook said there would be nothing left for the Community. Camillus laughed and insisted. The cook, in a very bad temper, went to the Prefect of the house: "We must manage with bread and cheese," said he. The cook, still very upset, went back to his kitchen, passed by Camillus's room and noticed that he was praying, and then found in the kitchen dishfuls of fine macaroni and

as much meat as before. He rushed wildly back, calling out 'A miracle', and so did the Superior, especially as the bell for dinner had just rung. I add an instance of his 'second sight', if you like to call it that (such instances, especially perhaps at this time, could be multiplied: they involved so much *concrete* material, and so many persons, that it would be hard indeed to discredit them). A certain Urbanucci had come from Bucchianico to Rome, looking for his brother who had deserted his wife and four children. He could not find him; but before leaving Rome he went to pay his respects to Camillus. "What," said he—"you have been four days in Rome without coming to see me? And meanwhile, you go hunting for lunatics? Come back to-morrow: your brother hasn't yet come to Rome, but he will be home with you in a fortnight." Urbanucci duly returned, and Camillus gave him a letter for his nephew Alessandro. "Tell him", he added, "that if he doesn't marry soon, he will die: in fact a certain Cupano proposed to murder him, but is already under arrest." Alessandro, as you may suppose, was furious, and thought that Urbanucci had told his uncle of his misdoings: but when the story about Cupano proved true, was stupefied, said he would change his life, but didn't. And then, Urbanucci's brother returned, and in fact *was* mad: as for the nephew, we relate the epilogue below.

In April, 1612, Camillus was summoned to Bucchianico where there was a terrible famine which he was expected to cope with. (On the way he rescued a lost lamb, and carried it back, well wrapped up, to its shepherd. There are many 'Franciscan' incidents in his life, but we can hardly 'group' and analyse them.) The entire population came out to meet him; yet oddly enough, a certain religious community there disliked him and was doing all it could to hinder the completion of the new House, and

was trying to divide public opinion about him. (Afterwards, he cured that Community's Superior, who had a festering finger and could not say Mass or play the organ, of which he was very fond. He also managed to supply the Community with food during the famine, which quite brought them round to approve of him.) Camillus began by seeing to the *immediate* needs of his home-town; and then went to Chieti and devised a system of public assistance, with a whole method of coupons dealt out most scientifically according to needs. He returned suffering from fever and had to stay in bed; but the eight men charged with distributing food were told to visit him daily, and he supervised their activities during a two hours' interview. Perhaps feeling that nothing really so wins a man's heart, if he does not like you, as to get him to do you a kindness, he asked his nephew Alessandro to lend him a horse for a necessary journey. Alessandro did—acknowledging that it was a "very impetuous one". Camillus, who could manage any horse, said he didn't mind, and got on to it. Whereupon the horse kicked Alessandro very hard. He fell down howling that he was for ever crippled. Camillus touched his head and said it would be nothing. Nor was it. When Alessandro took off his shoes and stockings, he found only a slight bruise. The hint, however, was not sufficient. Nothing that Camillus could say touched him at all. Even a severe illness, of which Camillus's prayers cured him, helped nothing. Camillus said that it would not happen twice like that—"and I don't know how you'll die". Alessandro continued his dissolute life and died suddenly in 1620.

The time then came to say Good-bye for the last time to his city. He said it first in the pulpit, adding that he meant to go to Rome and die there. But first, in July, he went to Naples, and arrived very ill. All food nauseated

him. They told Cardinal Ginnasi, who had suggested that Camillus should be sent to Spain and establish his Order there: the Cardinal gave up the idea, insisting, however, that Camillus should return to Rome when possible. Thereupon Camillus grew a little better and, though he kept death always before his eyes, resolved to spend whatever time remained in yet harder work: he left Naples, therefore, for the last time—did it now seem but the other day to him, when he had swaggered his raffish way through those same streets and gambled away his very clothes?

In Rome, he returned at once to his old service, choosing always what most disgusted human nature for his privilege. It is now, too, that you chiefly hear of his ecstasies and the radiant beauty of his face. Men felt that he was conscious of only two realities—which in a sense made one: of God, and of the Sick, in whom he saw nothing but Christ; if he thought of himself at all, it was with wonder that God had chosen so feeble a servant as he, to do His will. Feeble? Well, his leg was now so bad that he had sometimes to walk on all fours; and at times could no more stand up at all. They feared he might die actually in the wards; but he asked where better could a soldier die than on his field of battle? He used many such military metaphors; and, when asked why he had given up visiting Cardinals, he said that he must stand booted and spurred, ready at any moment to obey the command to present himself before his Lord.

In April, 1613, Opertis decided to resign from the Generalate: the 5th General Chapter elected Fr. Nigli as his successor. Many (though not all) had criticised Opertis severely for having not seldom opposed the wishes of Camillus, and for having all-but put the Institute for ever on the wrong track. These criticisms

(which did not cease after his death) certainly caused Opertis to think too ill of himself and to feel he was not fit to govern. He obtained leave to establish himself at the 'Incurables' and to be as like Camillus there as he could. I can but repeat: It was the duty of Opertis to support the Founder in every way that he could: it was also evident to him that the future Institute (and even the present one) would not be, nor was, composed wholly of Camilluses. He had to build a bridge. Nothing is harder, when the bridge is a spiritual one. Dare I say that St. Paul, in his epistles, is seen as a Bridge-Builder between the Sermon on the Mount and the Corinthian Christians? St. John, between the Supper-Room, and the church in Ephesus? Ask *yourself* how the good Catholic of to-day looks, when you compare him with the Beatitudes. If you think there is a difference, what would you advise? I for my part wish again to pay a very sincere homage to the un-canonised Opertis, across the gulf of years.

Nigli, at any rate, did not propose to dissociate himself from Camillus, and in fact decided to visit all the Houses of the Institute and to take Camillus with him. This seemed to demand a major miracle. But the Saint accomplished the journey without disaster, including in it a three days' visit to Lorcto—and indeed seemed to spend as long doing homage at the shrines of Saints as in hospitals. At Mantua, he spent much time with Francis Gonzaga, bishop of that city; and I feel I should express my regret for having spoken of Duke Vincent Gonzaga (in *The Vocation of Aloysius Gonzaga*) in none but opprobrious terms. I did not then know the fascination that St. Camillus exercised upon him. "I have never met a man", said the Duke, "who has made me grieve over my sins as Camillus did—and yet I have talked with the most famous men of letters and of spirituality."

He insisted that Camillus should bequeath his crucifix to him. And we cannot but be touched when we remember that St. Aloysius's father retained his young son's crucifix, and, having been as mad a gambler as Camillus was, gave the whole thing up under the influence of that crucifix. Thence to Milan. But in June, Camillus asked to be relieved from following the rest of the Visitation, and in fact went thence to his beloved Genoa. Here he was so ill that he was ordered to stay in bed, but could not resist visiting such sick persons as asked to see him, even being carried through the town (for he could not walk) to do so.

When it was feared that Camillus might die, and that if he did the Genoeses would never let his relics leave the city, his associates asked that he might return, well or ill, to Rome. Such, too, was his prayer. The only possible way of transporting him was by sea. Duke Doria provided him with a galley reserved for great personages: for once Camillus accepted the privilege; and "the Holy Spirit breathed it on its way", for it arrived at Civita-vecchia in the incredibly short space of three days. There, too, they wanted to hurry him to Rome—he could not even say good-bye to the sailors, whom he always loved. But he said they would reach Rome earlier than 8 or 9 p.m., which was what they expected, especially as his litter was harnessed to "two ancient and evil mules". But "the wind seemed to carry those mules", and they got there about three or four o'clock, it being October 13, 1613. There are those who (quite rightly) have no care where their remains shall lie: others (far from wrongly) may have definite desires about that. Camillus was intensely desirous that his dead body should lie in earth soaked with the blood of Martyrs, and sanctified by the ashes of Apostles and the great Princes of Christ.

At the Maddalena, he first visited the Blessed Sacra-

ment: then, his beloved Crucifix: then, the sick in the Infirmary, and finally went to his room. The doctor insisted of his being dispensed from the Breviary for a fortnight—and this alleviation, despite his protests, was renewed again and again. At last he obtained a priest who should recite it aloud near him, so that he could associate himself to what was said, without saying it. In November, Fr. Nigli, who had been ill in Sicily, returned, and with a ‘crown’ of Religious, dear to Camillus, surrounded his sick bed.

He remained united in heart with his sick. When the bell rang to say it was time for the Fathers to go to Santo Spirito, he, as it were, went with them: every Sunday, he had the detailed record of the week’s work read to him. In fact, one day when he was rather better, he asked the doctor if he mightn’t be taken out to get a breath of fresh air. The doctor hesitatingly gave leave. At once Camillus, gleeful and almost like a naughty boy, had himself driven to Santo Spirito—well! he had always said that the air there was better than anywhere else!—and with the utmost difficulty visited the wards. Everyone rushed to kiss his hands. As for the servants, apparently they said: “Here’s Fr. Camillus! We had better keep our heads and go straight to look after our sick! Else we shall get our knuckles properly rapped!” Thence he was carried to St. Peter’s, and thence home. However, after a few days, he got back to the hospital for what really was the last time. He knew this—and yet he would not allow the keys of his room there to be given back to the ‘Prior’. He knew he would never return there—yet he liked to feel that he still, somehow, *was* there, and not only “in spirit and heart”. We have finished, then, in this book, with Santo Spirito. It is said that the mere name of Camillus is but inscribed casually in one place there. Well, I am happy to have experienced that

one has but to walk near to its walls to be conscious of the sweet fragrance of the Saint's memory, indeed of his presence, and that whether the modern hospital forgets him or not, he does not forget it, nor disregard the sick, who, generation by generation, are nursed within its walls.

III

Naturally, in proportion as his friends realised that he was dying, they treasured as many minute details about what he did or said as they could. Unfortunately, we cannot relate many of these, if only because he often repeated himself, and said very simple things, such as, that he was happy to die . . . that they must go on serving the sick. But they all noticed his extreme serenity which communicated itself to, refreshed and transformed, all who came to visit him. This is the more remarkable because while he felt it his *duty* to eat, lest he let himself die of starvation, the very sight of food made him feel horribly ill, and, if he did eat anything, he was violently sick. He said he deserved it "because of the time when I ate with such great appetite"! And now—how do the Saints disconcert us if we want to be romantic about them! One day, he confided to someone that he could 'fancy' some Bologna sausage. They said he ought at once to write to Fr. Pieri, Prefect in Bologna, and he did so, saying that Signora Francesca Castella would provide it—but adding twice that it must be a *little* one. A whole business grew up around this sausage. Fr. Pieri had in any case to come to Rome, and arrived complete with sausage. Being a remarkably good cook, he "several times" prepared some of it for the Saint who apparently enjoyed it. Pieri was so enchanted that he asked if he might not remain in Rome at Camillus's service: but

Camillus said that had the request been made for some sick man other than himself, he would have granted it: as it was—No.¹

But the day came when Camillus heard the doctors standing around him discussing some new treatment. "Listen," said he. "I have had so many medicines—in Naples, in Genoa, in Rome, and they none of them have done me any good. God does not *want* me to be cured. I *ought* to suffer a little, at any rate at the end of my long life . . ." And he told them more horrible things about his suppurating leg than even they had known. Then they told him he could not get better. At once he was flooded with joy. He could "go home" with a good conscience, and with no fear for his Order: "God will cause men to be born strong enough to help and defend it." He continued to struggle to carry out the spiritual rules of the house: he strained his ears to catch echoes of what was being read in the refectory: when he could, he dragged himself to the infirmary (fifteen paces from his room) so as to be present at Mass: finally he transferred himself altogether there, two strong Brothers just able to help him into it—poor Camillus . . . he was so doubled up with pain that his head was almost touching his knees. Here then he lived for the fifty-eight days remaining to him.

¹ We smile to read that during the discussions about Camillus's canonisation, the Devil's Advocate, as we called him, adduced this story as a proof that Camillus had not observed 'temperance' heroically. The objection was 'exhaustively' replied to. I hope it was recalled that St Francis of Assisi, on his death-bed, asked a devoted lady for a little cake of raisins and almonds: possibly it was not yet known that St John of the Cross himself, when mortally ill, said that he would like some asparagus, and got it. . . . Oddly, a young man with whom I was when he was dying, also asked for sausages (and indeed, for onions). His mother produced them. The consequences were appalling. Yet this young man, who I cannot pretend had lived like a Saint, died very nearly like one; in any case, it is clear that undoubted Saints had not *annihilated* their human nature, and are not afraid or ashamed of it, and from time to time grant it some little treat.

During those days, he said good-bye to friend after friend who passed through Rome or had to leave it, blessing them and asking their prayers, dictated a number of letters, signing them as best he could, and above all, dictated a very long "Testament-Letter" in which he "expressed his mind" about his Order. This was to be sent to every Superior and read and explained to each Community. It is far too long and involved—it begins with twenty-three lines (in the Italian book in which I am reading it) without a full-stop, but, given the period, this is not extraordinary—to be fully translated here. He regards the origin of his Institute as 'miraculous', chiefly because he, such a sinner, so ignorant, so full of incompetencies, had been chosen to be its Founder. He insists that the devil always 'under the appearance of doing good'—Camillus never dreams that his men will do harm *knowing* that it is harm—will try to 'adapt' his ideal, especially as regards the Vow of Poverty. They must be true to the Papal Bulls which had approved the Institute as he had designed it. Camillus, a very simple man, could not foresee (any more than the most sophisticated man of his day) the future. The modern Camillan cannot live as if he were a sixteenth or seventeenth century man, any more than a modern Franciscan, Dominican or Jesuit can live exactly as their Founders did. This does not imply, as cynics say, degeneration. Anyhow, Camillus, relying always on papal approbation, would always have accepted (after a pious kick or two) any modification in method that successive Popes might impose or agree to. But what he insisted on was, first, that the spiritual welfare of his Religious and of those they served must come first. Christ must live in his men; and, in the sick, it was Christ that they must see. And then, "I intend that never must the care for the spiritual as such be separated from the care of the body." His

Institute was different from all others, in that it aimed—of course—at spiritual sanctification, but always in the person of Servants of the *sick*, and of the sick themselves. I have perhaps never read a statement about a Saint's intentions so clearly defined. He was distressed if he did not hear at once that his letter had been received and read aloud and explained.

The dreadful ordeal of being visited then began. Cardinals, Ambassadors, Generals of Religious Orders, all wanted to see Camillus before he died. To the General of the Discalced Carmelites, a great friend and very frequent visitor, he said that he begged that all the Carmelite Friars should pray for him in "this last step of death". He asked this on his knees, because he had been a great sinner, a gambler, a man of bad life. He preferred to be visited by someone, like doctors, who could tell him about his sick: but even these were, so far as possible, prevented from approaching the exhausted man. One youth, having been twice repulsed, sat down on the threshold of the house, and said: "If you won't let me alive into his presence, you will have to take me away dead. For I am not going to move." So they let him in. Other young men, helpless victims of sensuality, found themselves suddenly set free by a single visit to this Founder of an Order, who was dying like the poorest of his confrères in an infirmary. Camillus, on his death-bed, was exercising a new Apostolate. He made promises about spiritual and even temporal affairs that he had to repeat "four or five times" before visitors could believe that they would be kept. But they were. Nor could men leave him—even the most exalted—without kneeling for his blessing; and anything that he had so much as touched was taken away, as were the 'handkerchiefs' from the body of St. Paul (Acts 19, 12).

But behind all this, his mind never left God. He said that he was "stupefied—knocked silly—how the Creature should not perfectly love its Creator". But then, since he felt that he himself did not, he begged for prayers that his soul might be saved. Hence he wished to concentrate on the salvation of sinners by Christ. He asked for a picture of Christ Crucified with Angels receiving the Sacred Blood in chalices. Above was seen the Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit and two Angels offering to God that Precious Blood for the remission of the sins of Camillus. Beneath were Our Lady and St. Michael praying for him. At the bottom was written the liturgical invocation "Save Thy servant whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious blood". Fr. Mancini, whom Camillus had asked to have the picture painted, did so, but added a small figure of Camillus himself with the words quoted above issuing (after the fashion of those and later times) from his lips. Camillus was not pleased: He said: "Lord, You knew that that was not my intention. But since You willed it like that, it is a sign that I must hope all the more that You will show mercy towards me." He saluted each personage portrayed in turn, saying to Our Lady: "Most holy Mother, obtain for me grace from your Son that I may willingly suffer all pain, and if that is not enough to send me still more." From that time onwards, he seems to have been entirely preoccupied with the thought of his sinful life—which appeared to him always to have been so—and the five wounds of Our Lord, who had given the whole of His sinless life for us, and had not refused even the most terrible death, though so innocent.

Camillus had now lost any wish to live that he might have had: Mancini said he had been praying that Camillus might live a little longer; but the Saint answered that a long life as such simply increased the fear of

death, whereas alone hope in God's mercy not only made the thought of death less sad, but happy and something to be longed for: when someone else said he hoped that on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen (July 22) Camillus would be strong enough to go up to the Madalena church to watch the ceremonies, he answered with some of his old abruptness: "On that day I shall be under it." On May 1 he called Fr. Mancini and asked if he had obtained new oil for Extreme Unction, for, said he, in a few days you will need it for another priest, "and then for myself". Cardinal Ginnasi, the Protector of the Institute, heard that Camillus wanted to receive the Last Sacraments: on July 2 the Cardinal came himself, said Mass in the infirmary, and then prepared to give Viaticum to the dying man. Camillus repeated the triple *Domine non sum dignus*, and then said "with many tears": "My Lord, I confess that I have never done any good and am a wretched sinner; so I have nothing left but hope in Your divine Mercy and Your Precious Blood." Afterwards, the Cardinal asked him if he was at peace and comforted: he said that he felt no fear, but asked for prayers, and then begged that his dispensation from saying Office might be renewed. They assured him it was unnecessary: he said that even if the candle of the dying was lighted and beside him, still that dispensation should be asked for, "for the quiet of my conscience". On Thursday, July 10, he asked for the Holy Oils and made a general confession: he was in fact anointed next day, after Holy Communion (which, despite his raging thirst, he always received fasting): he said the Confiteor with a clear voice; and finally, helped to sit up in bed, he cried out twice: "Glory to God!" Then he asked leave from Fr. Nigli, the General, to speak to the Fathers and Brothers. He once more recommended to them obedience to the Roman Church and the Pontiff, fraternal

charity, loyalty to the Rules and to the Apostolate of the Sick, reiterated his assertion that the Institute had been miraculously founded, begged pardon for the bad example he had given, and, "so far as God grants it to me, I give you all a thousand blessings, and to the absent, and to those yet to come". They all knelt and then kissed his hand with many tears. Then they left him alone to rest, though he said he would never grow tired in the service of his beloved brethren.

But in a few moments Fr. Mansi returned saying that persons of distinction wanted to visit him. Camillus begged them to excuse him—he had just received Unction and wished to recollect himself. Mansi insisted that they were important persons, and wanted to satisfy their devotion. "Their devotion?" exclaimed Camillus, horrified. "By seeing a man in bed with his body already half decayed? Let them go and practise charity in a hospital and not waste time looking at the worst of men." And he recalled that death could be died only once and that the most must be made of the short time left. However, that same evening the private Chamberlain of Paul V came to give Camillus the papal benediction he had asked for: Camillus thanked the Divine Majesty for having brought him back to die in Rome, and thanked and prayed for the Pontiff with intensity and tenderness. He could still dictate and sign short letters, and even wrote one with his own hand to the Bologna Provincial and he received visits from members of half the Religious Orders in Rome, so was he loved: but naturally little was quoted from these save his expressions of sorrow, gratitude and trust in the Precious Blood, and his hopes that they would meet again in heaven.

However, on Saturday, July 12, he dictated a "last will and testament" to his Confessor, which next day he

caused to be read and witnessed by a number of his brethren. It is, to me, a most strange yet characteristic, vivid and moving document : yet far too long for quotation here especially as it includes so many repetitions. He bequeaths his earthly body to the earth, whence it came, and also in penance for the sins which it had committed through sensuality and had caused its soul to commit. He bequeaths his sins against God to the wicked Tempter, and desires to repent perfectly, from the love of God rather than "his own interests" or fear; and may God punish the tempter-demons if they give him scruples about having made bad confessions, and may God's mercy forgive him even if he had made nothing *but* bad ones, for God can save him without Sacraments: if he remembers anything un-confessed, he will confess it; if he has forgotten anything, he is sorry inside his heart, and hopes for salvation only through the merits of the Blood of Christ. He bequeaths to the World all vanities, transitory things, worldly satisfactions, empty hopes, curiosities, yes, even friends and relatives, because he wants to exchange what is passing for what is eternal, and all worldly curiosity for the true vision of the Face of God. He bequeaths to his Flesh all the pains that he may yet have to suffer, partly as penance, wholly for the love of Him who endured a much worse agony *for* him . . . his inability to eat or sleep, "bad words", and all the hateful things, outrages and insults of which he has been guilty towards his neighbours and forgives all that he has suffered from them and asks forgiveness for himself and them. He bequeaths his soul and its faculties to his beloved Jesus and His Most Holy Mother and to St. Michael and His Guardian Angel—thus . . . his Memory to his Guardian Angel recognising what that help has meant to him, and begging God not to "judge or discuss" what has seemed to him to be good—why, even David

said: "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord . . ." "If *he* said that, how much more should I!" But there *has* been good! So many Sacraments, good inspirations, and in particular the guardianship of "so beautiful an Angel", whom he then addressed, saying that if Camillus conquers, the glory will revert to the Angel who helped him to do so. And he leaves his intellect to St. Michael and protests that he does not intend to discuss or dispute with the Devil what regards the Faith: he dies loyal to the Catholic Apostolic Roman Church, to the Creed, to all that the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and the Councils have taught and ruled, and the Faith in which so many Saints, men and women, have lived, and he wishes to die ever confessing that he is a soldier of Jesus Christ Crucified; and in case the Devil tempts him, he wills not to consent, and if by "curiosity of mind I totter or consent", "*nunc pro tunc*—now, in view of then", "I intend that that should mean nothing and now that I am of right mind, I break and annul any such consent being of any value". And he prays St. Michael (the immemorially venerated Safe-Escort of the passing soul) to rescue him. He bequeaths, much more briefly, his will to Our Lady, queen of Angels, his Protectrix and Advocate and begs her to accept this his choice. Finally he bequeaths himself, body and soul, to Jesus Christ Crucified, who once received him as that good Father did his Prodigal Son, and asks that he may be forgiven as the Magdalen and the Good Thief were, and asks that his soul may be received, in this last step of life, into eternal rest together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Then he asks his friends to witness this his last will and testament, to help him and defend him against temptations in this his agony and death, and by their prayers afterwards. Seven priests signed the document and dated it. He asked that it should be tied to his right

arm and buried with him, while copies (of which certainly two still exist) were sent to the other houses.

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On the one hand, it seems to me impossible to write the 'life' of a Saint and in no way to comment upon his 'character'; yet, on the other, we must always feel how grave a thing it is thus to lay hands upon the Ark of God. However, we have full authority for saying that Saints were men and women and had each of them, therefore, their personal character, temperament, instincts and all else that goes to make up a living individual. Grace purifies, uplifts, and gives a new birth to all of this, but does not destroy any of it. Besides, we may assume that Saints die not only when their external work is finished, but not before their personal sanctification is complete: there is at least a probability, then, that God had not finished His work in them before He called their soul to Himself. In writing the following lines, we are bound sometimes to repeat what we have already said.

It is evident that Camillus was not only physically strong, but had a violent temper, and, after his conversion, held sin (especially blasphemy) and unbelief in such horror that many a time he felt, and showed, horror of and anger with the sinner himself. He would shudder and sweat if he heard blasphemy: clap his hand upon the blasphemer's mouth, cry out "with a suppliant yet terrible voice", with a "loud and imperious voice": "Silence ! silence ! do not blaspheme !" Once he saw a Jew, riding in the same coach as himself, looking with contempt at his crucifix. He spoke forcefully yet lovingly to him: the Jew maintained his sneer. Camillus flew into an "extreme fury" and was for throwing the Jew out of the coach. His companion had to restrain him. Camillus called the Jew all sorts of names and said that only the

fear of God kept him from hurling him that very moment into a ditch. The unhappy man, terrified by Camillus's distorted face, preferred to get out of his own accord. And after all, Camillus was over six and a half feet tall and broad-shouldered in proportion. We are certainly not wrong in seeing, at the root of this episode, Camillus's passionate love for our Lord; yet we need not be afraid of detecting in his *violence* of indignation something not yet perfected. Perhaps he referred to incidents like these when he mentioned, in his 'Testament', the "hatreds, outrages and insults" of which he felt himself to have been guilty.

We have already said that Camillus, incredible as it may seem, even during his headstrong youth preserved his purity intact, nor did he ever sully it; on the one hand, he safeguarded it with extreme care (almost, at times, one might think, fantastically): on the other, the appalling circumstances into which his hospital-work constantly led him, left him no possibility of being what we should call a prude. Indeed, I doubt whether anyone living at that time could have been prudish. Prudery is a later, and perhaps on the whole a northern product. Nor was the violence of his self-inflicted penances enough to account for what came to be his complete freedom from temptation. One day he said to a friend: "I know a man who for thirty years has had no more temptations than this wall has", and he struck the stones so hard that you would have said "he had an iron glove on". Add to this the quite motherly tenderness he felt for the sick, and you will feel confronted by contrasts so vehement that you will not seek for the origin of his virtue in anything merely psychological: here we recognise, quite simply, a grace of God.

But it has well been said that this exterior purity was a sort of coat-armour within which was enclosed his absolute singleness of heart. In those days, confessors could speak more freely than they now may, and all,

who heard his confessions from his definitive conversion to his death, insisted that they did not believe he ever, throughout those years, committed even a deliberate venial sin. With his customary plain-spokenness, he said that he believed that this was true. Yet here too he was conscious that it was God who guarded him. A man must know very little about himself if he is not conscious that he has *in* him the *possibility* of every sin, nay, that natural self-love which makes probable the commission of every fault that suits his temperament. Not everyone will be equally likely to commit every sort of sin ! So, if a Saint sees clear-sightedly, that God has in fact preserved him from such faults, he will also be able to see himself as a great sinner *in potentia*, especially when he has so spontaneous, forth-right and intense a temperament as Camillus's was. And naturally he often caught himself out in all those first movements, as they are called, which have nothing to do with the will, and are matters of instinct rather than conscience. None the less, he confessed them daily, and even, as we have seen, was afraid of scrupulosity not least in regard of his Breviary. Still, he acknowledged that he did all that was humanly possible to say it properly. As for the hour of morning meditation, he made it kneeling upright without support, suffering torments in his leg.

During these meditations "of rule" he did not, I think, experience any special or preternatural 'consolations', to say nothing of ecstasies: he wished to be an example to his religious of the "ordinary path" which they should tread. But we must modify that statement somewhat, or amplify it. He became so *accustomed* to referring everything to God that recollection was not difficult to him: he "could not help" seeing everything in the divine light: when there was no need to attend to anything in particular, his mind reposed entirely on God, partly with the help of his crucifix or rosary which he always held while walking

or riding: when he had to think of, speak of, or do something definite and exterior, it was still "from God's point of view" that he looks outwards. He was helped too by what seems to me his extraordinary simplicity of character: not but what his mind was active—he three times mentions 'curiosities' in his Testament; and though his spirit of faith and trust was so childlike and also so robust, he does affirm to St. Michael that he does not intend to "discuss or dispute" with the Devil about the Faith or anything pertaining to the Creed and tradition of the Church. It is conceivable therefore that even he was at times puzzled about this or that point of religion; but the Testament does not suggest that he experienced temptations against either hope or trust.

I think, however, that God communicated Himself very intimately to him during his hours of 'unofficial' prayer, so to call them, and especially of Eucharistic prayer, during his visits to the Blessed Sacrament and after Mass. I do not know whether I am right in this—but it is certain that Camillus remained a *relatively* unlettered man and I cannot see signs of his having read much (and indeed, when would he have found time?), so that maybe not only the saying of his Breviary was not easy for him—so careful was he to pronounce each word exactly, to carry out accurately each smallest rubric—but there may have been something of this even about Mass, especially as his iron truss and his wounded leg made the genuflections very difficult. However, his Mass inspired the deepest devotion in all who assisted at it: they even rang the bell in a special way when the hour for his Mass approached, and people flocked to be there. He was conscious of irreverences around him and even turned to rebuke those guilty of talking, for example: he also liked music during more solemn Masses, hymns or organ-music. I quote two small anecdotes because of their—

shall I say, picturesqueness, rather than because the first at any rate contains much that is directly edifying, as they put it. One day a cat, fiercely pursued by a dog, rushed up the church and leapt the altar at a single bound, just clearing the Chalice which Camillus had consecrated. He could not guess how, save by a miracle, it had not been upset. Again, he was descending the altar-steps to give Holy Communion when his foot caught in his alb and he fell full-length, on his face. Despite the agony this caused him, he managed to hold the Ciborium high and steady, so that not a particle fell from it. His entire thought was for the Blessed Sacrament.

Perhaps I have said enough about his devotion to Our Lady, in particular to the mysteries of her Immaculate Conception, her Purification and her Assumption. He could not fail to see how her intercession had kept pace with his own conversion and the foundation and development of his Institute. Nor need we dwell further on his devotion to the Saints; his heaven was populous with brothers and sisters lovingly interested in the struggles of his pilgrimage not yet over. But I should not be surprised if the hints we obtain from his 'Testament' do prove more illuminating than comments made upon Camillus by even his near acquaintance.

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All that Sunday, Camillus seemed alive 'only to pray', which he did continuously, helping himself by that picture of the crucifixion which reminded him of that Precious Blood for the sake of which alone he felt he could ask for his salvation. The night seemed to him intolerably long, though he knew he would not die during it and insisted that only one priest should remain with him, adding: "This is the last night you will have to do so, because to-morrow evening I shall pass from this life. I

do not know if the Fathers are thinking about my burial?" Fr. Califano said it had been spoken of, but nothing was decided. "I say so," replied the Saint, "because you will not have longer than to-morrow." In the morning he asked what time it was. "Twelve," he was told.¹ "So late? And you have not thought of celebrating Mass yet? Yet it will be the last that I shall hear." It was then celebrated: he followed it closely, making special signs during the Creed at the words 'Suffered under Pontius Pilate' and at 'Thence He shall come'. At the Memento for the Living, he said: "Brothers, help me! Now is the time! Prayer, prayer, that the Lord may save me." At the Elevation, he whispered: "Lord, Lord, mercy through Thy Precious Blood!" and again he said this at the Confiteor before that Communion which was his last before the eternal one.

During the day he sent to ask for prayers but would have no visitors save the Cardinal Protector whom he thanked and then two doctors. To one he said: "I am very soon expecting the Lord's call." To the other: "Hullo, Signor Galliano, a different Doctor is expecting me!" At three in the afternoon, he asked the time. ("Oh how long," he said, "is to-day!") He begged that his companions should remain around him, saying psalms and other prayers to which he answered as best he could. His confessor sprinkled him—sparingly—with holy water. "More water! more holy water!" he murmured. The confessor complied. "Now that is all right," said he. He recited the evening Ave Maria 'very well'. After an hour and a quarter, they asked him if he would not take some refreshment. "In another quarter of an hour," he said, "I *shall* be refreshed." After that quarter of an hour, he did indeed seem supernaturally better. A priest bent

¹ Hours were reckoned from the evening Ave Maria: this meant therefore, in the summer, 8 a.m.

over him, and said that since God was desirous of recalling him to Himself, he must fix all his hope in Christ crucified and His Precious Blood shed for us—in Him in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection—through whom we are saved and are set free. Camillus's eyes showed that he understood so dear a recollection. The Passing Bell was sounded, and all his Brothers came. The Penitential Psalms (as he had wished) were said, and then the prayers for the Dying. He looked once more at the Crucifix, and then towards heaven. He spread his arms out cross-wise and then died, while they said the liturgical words: "May the vision of Jesus Christ gentle and joyous appear to thee." This was about 9.45, on Monday evening July 14, 1614: Camillus was sixty-four years old, two months and twenty days.

He was carried, dressed in priestly vestments, into the church, and, as usual, when a Saint dies in Rome, all the city knew of it in a moment. Yet strangely, children first knew of it, and came running, or had to be carried there in their mothers' arms; and then, the hospitals—"The Father of the Poor is dead!" Such were the throngs, that the Cardinal Vicar had to be begged to send a military guard to protect the bed of death.¹ The Camillans asked for nothing save quiet. An order was issued strictly forbidding that anything of Camillus's should be given away as relics: his Requiem must be without music, sermon, or funeral decorations; he must be spoken of without mention of sanctity or miracles; he must be buried

¹ In honesty, I must say that a priest, whom I will not name, had come to that death-bed, gave Camillus what they call a Judas-kiss, was formally excluded by the Saint from the number of his sons 'because he reeked of heresy', and left saying: 'When will this deluded old man finish?' He went to the Cardinal Vicar and said it was a sacrilege and profanation to allow in the Maddalena the body of a man 'no better and probably worse than everybody else'. The Cardinal very wisely, for fear of pious tumults, said that Camillus must be buried that night. It is good to know that after much suffering this ex-Religious died a very happy death.

in the earth on the left of the altar without inscription, though on the coffin (they allowed themselves to place him in a triple coffin after a time—wood, lead, and again wood), with a leaden statement that “Here lies Fr. Camillus, Founder of the Clerks Regular of the Ministers of the Sick,” followed by dates and the attestation of the General of the Order. A simple brick cross marked the place of the burial.

But the very stones—and the heavens—cried out. It is quite certain that Camillus was seen by many, at a distance, who could not possibly have heard of his death: in no long time all Italy knew of that death. Then the populations could not be kept in control. Votive offerings piled themselves up on the place of the tomb as fast as the Fathers took them away. Finally, the Pope said that the devotion of the people must not be interfered with. In Naples, simple folks decorated all the streets leading to the church while the church itself was left rigorously unadorned. Everything was done to avoid a premature ‘cultus’; but accounts of graces obtained through the invocation of Camillus arrived in showers at the Maddalena. A death-mask had been taken of the Saint; and in October, 1614 pictures of him were allowed to be circulated. Eleven years after Camillus’s death—in 1625—permission was obtained from Urban VIII to open the tomb and see if the Saint’s relics were intact. In that damp soil, the outside coffin had fallen to pieces; even the leaden one in the middle had suffered much; on opening the third all were amazed to find the body perfectly incorrupt, its limbs fresh and flexible though its vestments had fallen to pieces and the face bore (as it had done from the outset) some marks where the boiling wax used to make the mask had scorched it. One of the doctors present actually made an incision (an autopsy had been made immediately after death and the heart removed) and the flesh was found

'as fresh as if it had been alive'. Also, for the nine days that the body remained above ground, an 'oil' distilled in great quantities from this wound and indeed had already so filled the bottom of the coffin that clothes were soaked in it and cures operated by means of it. Paper soaked in it burned vividly. Enormous crowds came to behold this prodigy. Again in 1640, because of the danger of new infiltrations of water, the tomb was re-opened. The coffin indeed was destroyed, and even sand and mud had entered it. The body was, however, intact, the skin unharmed, though slightly discoloured. This saddened the Camillans, and a better tomb was built and a new coffin made. But the Tiber's floods were such that the Maddalena itself was deluged and in 1661 a third recognition was made, and in 1694 a fourth, by which time the relics had been reduced to the skeleton and some fragments of the vestments. These were then transferred to chapels in the church itself, and, to anticipate, I add that on the final solemn 'recognition' at the time of Camillus's beatification, 1742, the chief relics were placed in a magnificent reliquary under the Altar raised in honour of the new Beato. The heart and the left foot are kept in other reliquaries.

Perhaps I should add a paragraph for the sake of those who are unaccustomed to the veneration of 'relics'. Men are men—that is, body-soul, and not angels, who are simple spirits. And if a man is holy, it is the *man* who is sanctified, not exclusively his soul. It is St. Paul who says that our bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6, 19). Moreover, in a true sense our bodies are to rise again¹ and we shall immortally be *ourselves*

¹ Since men of science now know less and less what 'matter' is, and have reduced it practically to a mathematical hypothesis, I shall not be expected to offer here a philosophical formula defining what this means. Enough to say, that Catholics believe we shall be for ever true men, and not discarnate souls.

and not some different species. Therefore, in our simple way, we venerate not only the soul of a Saint (and certainly not merely his memory) but all that had anything to do with him—even, as in the case of St. Peter's shadow and St. Paul's handkerchiefs—and that body which was not only *his* but *he*. Yes. The Catholic mind is very simple, and very *inclusive* (being Catholic, how could it not be so?). If a mother keeps and kisses the shoe of her little baby who has died, and if (please God) we do not mock her, we shall understand why we preserve, venerate, and help ourselves by means of anything that has had to do with a Saint. If but it could be understood by non-Catholics how much *more*, more tender, humble, 'natural', rich is the Catholic belief and practice than that of those who have rejected it! One has to be very careful to be sure that what one thinks is more 'spiritual', less 'materialistic', is not more *thin*, less divine just because less human! After all, the centre of the Christian Faith is not a Philosophical God, but God Incarnate!

As for the architectural changes at the Maddalena, I cannot go into them. Inevitably, the church had to be enlarged; *but not* inevitably, to my way of thinking, were ancient rooms like those where St. Camillus or St. Aloysius or even St. Ignatius died, first 'beautified' and sometimes destroyed. The later Renaissance considered them ugly and 'unworthy'. Could they but have foreseen that we would now have wanted to touch what the Saints touched: to see with our eyes what they saw with theirs! Happily, we can still see—and touch—things like St. Philip's spectacles, St. Camillus's bottle of ointment that he put upon his wound, letters written by Saint after Saint that I have held in my fingers. Yes, it makes me happy to do that, rather even than to touch my mother's lace or her jewels—which does not mean that I do not

love the memory of the very park in which she danced, and the room in which she died, when I was a little child. Of course I do—the very memory of the scent of that house is different to me from any other. But such things are of course secondary. Let them disappear, even if it was a Saint who lived there or used them.

Almost immediately after Camillus's death it was asked that he should be named a Saint. His process of beatification was accomplished in 1628. But then, infinitely stricter regulations about beatifications and canonisations began to be introduced especially by Prospero Lambertini (later Benedict XIV) and they endure to this day—a solitary serious exception being made (I think) for S. Thérèse de Lisieux whose personality defeated all rules. Anyhow, after this long delay Camillus was proclaimed 'Beato' on April 8, 1742. Rome roared with artillery; the Maddalena and half Italy were transformed. The Canonisation followed only four years afterwards, Aug. 29, 1746. I hope that readers will understand how slow Rome is to decide about anything so enormous as is Sanctity. No popular enthusiasm, no sentimentalism, ever stirs Rome. For her, 100 years are but as yesterday. Rome is eternal. We small excited little men do not matter at the moment—may possibly matter after sixty years—may seriously matter after two hundred years. Therefore I am in no way concerned about the slowness of the Canonisation of St. Camillus de Lellis. On the contrary, I am glad if for the sake of the world at large and secondarily for the sake of her own reputation for carefulness, and above all for the sake of her own responsibility before God, the Church is very slow to tell her children that a man may safely be regarded as a 'Saint'—a Christian so totally 'according to Christ' that God Himself seals him as being so.

VI

The moment Christianity came into the world, Christ's doctrine that those who cared for the sick, cared for Himself began to be translated into act. Nor was the care for the sick compassionate only: close study accompanies it: Tertullian, (d. about A.D. 200) called medicine the sister of philosophy. In the East, St Basil founded a hospital so vast as to be called a "new city", with its special quarters for the sick, the wounded, the insane, lepers . . . without distinction of creed or nationality (d. 379). In Italy, when round about the year 400 such throngs of wealthy men and women abdicated their great position for the "ascetical life", they nearly always served in hospitals or indeed created them, such as Fabiola, St. Paula; and we can safely say that hardly a diocese would have been without its hospitals and asylums, had these not been constantly destroyed in the barbarian invasions, so that all had to be begun again. St. Benedict (d. 550) by insisting that his monks should study medicine, created a universal precedent and even mystics like St. Hildegard (d. 1179) wrote long treatises into which all available knowledge was gathered. Nor was the quality of this knowledge poor: the medical school of Salerno was the first we know of to have a curriculum imposed on it by the State: King Roger II in 1140 insisted that prospective doctors should do five years of study and one of practical work before receiving, after due examination, their qualifications. But the main encouragement came from the Church: great prelates were glad to serve as doctors to secular personages: John XXI (d. 1277) composed a variety of medical treatises before he became Pope: one was "The Poor Man's Treasury"—advice for those too poor to pay doctors' fees: another, on ophthalmology.

The mere fact of such a man who, after lecturing in Siena, was appointed '*Archiater*', chief medical officer for the whole of Rome, being elected Pope, is indicative of the *attitude* of the Church towards medicine. Gerbert d'Aurillac (afterwards Pope Silvester II, d. 1003) had long taught in the diocesan school of Rheims.

Meanwhile Fraternities had been founded to look after the sick: the first was created by Soror in Siena (d. 898). The Antonine Brothers (at first designed especially to look after erysipelas) was begun about 1095 in France and made into a definite Order by Honorius III in 1218. Of course the Crusades created an enormous need for hospital-service—I mention only the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (the hospital it cared for in Jerusalem—which had several hospitals—contained over 2,000 beds). The Teutonic Order was approved by Clement III in 1191. But most important was the opening of a hospital at Montpellier about 1145 which Guy of Montpellier put in charge of Brothers named in honour of the Holy Spirit. Innocent III approved this in 1198 and in 1204 built that hospital of Santo Spirito in Sassia of which we have said so much. Practically every greater city in Europe soon contained one of these, thanks to the powerful impetus of that Pope. But as we also said, "charity grew cold", and the service of these hospitals degenerated; so did the Hospitaller Orders themselves: and with the arrival of the Renaissance so also—in spite of all that is conceitedly assumed—did medical science itself, for the Renaissance took for granted that nothing of any value had happened since the Greeks, and even so followed the 'school' of Galen (d. about A.D. 200), who developed medical theories and worked back thence to the treatment of the body, rather than that of Hippocrates (d. about 380 B.C.) who, like the medievalists, started from observation and induction.

The history of Sanctity itself, during the 15th century, shows a decline, at least to our human eyes. God forbid that I should be blind to many an instance of heroic charity (for it is of this that we are thinking rather than of, for example, ecstatic mysticism). Such were St. John of Kenty in Poland (1397–1473); St. Frances of Rome (1384–1440); notably St. Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510; see p. 11); St. Jerome Aemilian (1481–1537); St. Thomas of Villanova (1488–1555); to mention only a few: but what an efflorescence of self-sacrificing holiness appears just as the world became supremely self-worshipping! Observe that St. John of God, consecrated to the care of hospitals especially for the insane, born in 1495, died in 1550, the year in which St. Camillus was born, (the year too in which the ardent little Polish prince, Stanislaus Kostka, was born): but he died at 18, in 1568: his successor, Aloysius Gonzaga, a Lombard prince, was born in 1568 and died in 1591 of that plague (see p. 71) in which Camillus and his friends worked so heroically. St. Charles Borromeo (1538–1584), whose friend and adviser was St. Andrew Avellino (1521–1608), remained intimately dear to Camillus. Need I mention again St. Philip Neri (1515–1595), or stress St. Vincent de Paul (1576–1660), or St. Francis de Sales (1567–1622), whose names are household words among Catholics? We are less likely to be familiar with St. Toribio (1538–1606), a Spanish archbishop of Lima, or the B. John Glande (Pecador) who died in 1600 in Spain, a Hospitaller of St. John of God and devoted not only to hospital-work, but prisons, and a score of others that might so easily be mentioned. Observe that I have said nothing, once more, about Saints who lived enclosed and ‘mystical’ lives such as St. Teresa (d. 1582) or St. John of the Cross (d. 1591), or of theologians like St. Peter Canisius or St. Robert Bellarmine (d. 1597; 1681), or great missionary apostles within Europe like St.

Fidelis Sigmaringen (d. 1622) or St. Josaphat (1623) both of whom died martyrs; or even of that hero of charity and apostle of negro slaves in America, St. Peter Claver (d. 1654, the same year as St. John Baptist de la Salle, a true educationist), not yet of the army of foreign missionaries like the sons of St. Vincent de Paul and of course St. Francis Xavier (d. 1552) nor even of the martyrs who in America and Japan no less than in England died at the command of tyrants and of heretics, But I stop, lest I seem to exclude or even to forget the names of so many for whom we thank God yearly at Mass. What becomes of the great rulers of this world when we think of those heavenly princes? In certain ways we remember Ivan IV, Boris, Michael Romanoff of Russia (1584, 1613, 1646); Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden (d. 1632); here in Denmark, Christian IV, (1648); Elizabeth of England (d. 1603); Henri III and IV and Louis XIII of France (d. 1589, 1610, 1643); Charles I, Phillip II and III of Spain (d. 1556, 1598, 1621); Emperors like Rudolf I (d. 1612), but as often as not our memories are tinged with sadness if not horror and we have to beg pardon for their crimes or lament their mistakes. Probably with more gratitude and admiration we recall names like those of poets or men of science—Ariosto and Tasso (1533; 1595); Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton (1616, 1599, 1674); Ronsard, Corneille (1585, 1636) and with more mixed feelings Rabelais or Montaigne (1553; 1592); Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderon (1616, 1635, 1681); Kepler, Lipsius, Tycho Brahé (1630, 1606, 1601).

Two reflections occur to me—first, how periods of which we often think so ill are found to be, if we examine them closely, full of holiness: but what school-book helps us to do that? Yet if we do not, how totally false a perspective we get of human life as lived then! And second, how false in a particular way! I mean, how beautiful,

lovable and living a thing is holiness ! How thin and poor appear those other lives compared with *holy* lives ! how mean their psychology ! how non-integrated their personality ! how deplorable their exploits ! Think for a moment of Camillus, and then of Drake ! I find more romance, even, in a year of Camillus's life than in the whole history of Elizabethan piracy or the wars of Gustavus Adolphus. And the Catholic knows experimentally that he can talk and have dealings with Camillus even now—a living soul : but who, alas, would *wish* to talk with half of the heroes of the battlefield or the ornaments of those courts ? Light, sweetness, humanity and heaven, enter the world along with the Saints.

The Camillan organisation numbered less than 300 Professed Fathers at the time of Camillus's death—this excludes lay-brothers and novices. But already 220 had sacrificed their lives in the service of the sick. The survivors were distributed among sixteen houses, all in Italy. Not till 1643 did the Order succeed in establishing itself in other lands, passing by way of Spain to Portugal and finally to Peru. But it would be tedious to relate in detail its gradual expansion, though for various reasons it has never become very large. One reason is that the Order exists entirely for a single object—the care of the sick—and this is not one which attracts attention : others, whose duty it may be to write, to preach, to educate, to go abroad as missionaries, draw to themselves a greater variety of characters and earn inevitably more publicity. Again, until hygienic methods began rapidly to improve, the death-rate among Camillans was very high. Finally, even apart from the political upheavals which became endemic in Europe and which caused the suppression of religious houses periodically, the progressive secularisation of hospitals took away a good deal of work from Religious, though even now I have been struck, when travelling, by

the enormous amount of hospital work done by Religious, though especially by nuns, and for men and women of all creeds, and by how glad Governments have often been to avail themselves of men and women whose healing work is a vocation rather than a profession.

Camillus had obtained that a fourth vow should be added to the customary three—that of serving the sick, the plague-stricken included. We have seen how heroically the Camillans performed this service to the plague-stricken during his life. But the plague continued to return. In 1624 it broke out at Palermo; the superintendence of the new lazaretto of Sta Lucia was given by the Viceroy to Fr. Terzago and was so perfectly organised that Prof. A. Corradi who describes it minutely can call it a model for all such institutions. But in 1630 to 1631 the plague became almost universal in Italy. Manzoni, in his *Promessi Sposi* describes its horrors so far as Milan was concerned: about 60 Camillans served there of whom seventeen died, among whom was Fr. Terzago himself.

The same story might be related of Mantua, of Bologna (where 30,000 persons died) and of many another Italian town. It is interesting to note that although nothing was then known of microbes as such, it was held certain that the plague was communicated by contact, and that some material of "infinite subtlety" conveyed it from an infected to a healthy person. Disinfection-posts were therefore by as many city-gates and elsewhere as possible, and disinfection certainly seems to have been pretty drastic (it was applied also to all correspondence, and Religious were thought specially fitted for this part of the work, as they could keep secrets better and be trusted not to steal what might be enclosed); in fact, there is a good deal of amusement to be derived from these records—quite as many people objected to being scrubbed in extremely hot baths recking with sulphur as they now dislike being

vaccinated. Fr. Zazio, who was sent to Imola, became nicknamed the Angel of the Probatic Pool. It is interesting to note that by now doctors by profession were beginning to enter the Camillan Order—the greatest help to the Camillans who could thus intensify their own medical training at home and at less cost. I select one anecdote from the annals of this plague. Fr. Marapodio was working at Borgo Nuovo Piacentino: *all* the priests of the town had died: then he saw the fatal signs of the bubonic plague break out on his own body. He went to the church, consumed the Blessed Sacrament, and was found later on still kneeling and leaning against the altar, having died there.

In 1656–7 plague broke out worse than ever, and only by the grace of God the Camillan Order did not expire altogether. At Naples, ninety-six out of one hundred Fathers died, and the remaining four became infected. Truc, in Rome, owing to the energetic measure of Alexander VII, mortality was less. He ordered doctors to visit every family twice daily, and the moment they observed signs of infection, the entire family was put into quarantine for forty days, and the infected persons, Cardinals included, were put into the Island of the Tiber, entrusted to Camillan care. But, for example, at Genoa, where of its 90,000 inhabitants 64,000 died, the Camillans lost thirty-seven out of their fifty men. While we regret that for the sake of space we cannot treat this chapter of Camillan history at greater length, we regret still more that we know all too little about it—it can be well imagined that the Camillans themselves had no time, and often no strength, to write long records of their own history. Other but more localised outbreaks of plague can be noted—in 1667, 1709, 1743 at Messina (with such violence that the very prisoners had to be freed that they might disencumber the streets of corpses) and we may

here recall that during the terrible earthquake there in 1908 no less than nine Camillans were killed during rescue-work.

Cholera is said to have arrived in Russia from India in 1823 and reached Italy in 1835. It would now be possible to make a list of places where the Camillans worked from 1835 to 1911. I prefer merely to mention Fr. Giovanni Baravalle, who served especially in Genoa during the epidemics of 1835, '36, '37, '54, '55, '56, '66, '67, '73, '84 and '87: he died, aged eighty-six, in 1889. And by now we begin to have photographs, instead of the rather disconcerting engravings which craft made possible and custom agreeable (I suppose) in earlier times. He seems to have been a fine and most burly man, with perfectly horizontal eyebrows, piercing eyes ready to twinkle with caustic Italian humour, a jutting nose and a mouth so firm and down-turned at the corners that you might have feared he would be truculent (and at times he doubtless was) and even ruthless, did you not know that type, with its endless kind-heartedness. He was completely convinced that cholera was in no way contagious, and, what is more, convinced Cavour, no less, that it wasn't. So not only were the King and some of his extremely reluctant Ministers paying rapid visits to the hospitals, but Cavour used to go there "as to a public garden" and developed a sort of mania for touching the patients to see how ill they were. This did the patients a lot of good, and himself, no harm. For all I know, cholera is not contagious; but everyone else then thought it was, and the incident is psychologically interesting, and throws a pleasing light upon Cavour, not to mention Baravalle, whose motto was: "Have a good conscience and you won't catch cholera." He must have had much public recognition, since his broad chest carries not only the Camillan Red Cross, but half a dozen medals.

Balzac said that alcoholism was much more to be feared than cholera. Fr. Dalla Giacomo quaintly remarks that the Camillans took up what we in England call 'temperance-work' just when modern science was endeavouring to extract alcohol from all that it could. Already in 1899 the Camillans along with others built the first 'sanatorium' for alcoholics—the first in Germany; possibly in Europe—at Werden-Heidhausen: it was an enormous building, in which both Gothic and Baroque are seen melting into what may be called Yesterday-Practical. Other such German sanatoriums followed. The treatment lasted for *at least* six months: I cannot judge how far it would be now regarded as physically perfect, but psychologically it certainly was. And it was hence that a whole series of societies was inaugurated in many countries, and the first Skt Kamillus-Haus is (or was) the central secretariate of the great League of the Cross round which the other societies grouped themselves, whether or not leagues of 'total' abstinence.¹

But as I write (1944), the words 'Red Cross' are associated almost entirely with War—the wounded; prisoners; their friends and so forth. Well, Camillus had been a soldier. We have already related how Naples in the very life-time of Camillus had implored help for the inrush of soldiers from Spain, and we have recalled how Opertis and at times Camillus himself worked there. The horrors of modern warfare are no better than those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—well! are they

¹ The present writer may be allowed to say that he had always thought drunkenness a northern rather than a Latin calamity. In country parts, this is probably still true. But from evidence before him, it is clear that alcoholism has enormously increased also in the south. Already in 1915 it had to be stated, *officially*, in Italy, that in 10 years the 'victims' of alcoholism had risen from 16 to 110 per million. This may be due to the increased 'nervousness' of modern times, which seeks for sedatives; but much more, maybe, to the iniquitous adulteration of liquors which prevails despite all efforts to stop it. I trust that the Camillans will take also drug-victims into their consideration. And no doubt they do.

not worse? They cannot be worse physically and morally; but they are, in that their origin is so much more scientific. We spare the reader most of the details of the sicknesses that had then to be treated: but observe the Camillans de-lousing the soldiers' hair; cutting their nails; changing horrible bandages; washing men from head to foot "in disinfectant water"; spending days and nights where doctors would spend hardly ten minutes. But they appeared on the field of battle first, I think, in 1595 when the Turks were menacing, you may say, the whole of Europe. Among those who went out personally to combat them were Prince Aldobrandini, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and Duke Vincent Gonzaga of Mantua whose young kinsman-Saint had died four years before. These great personages appealed to the ex-soldier Camillus, who, they were sure, knew all about it. He appointed a certain number of his associates, and started himself, having made a splendid oration to his men on their duty towards soldiers. He laid down very exactly what rules should be observed in home-hospitals; what, in intermediate hospitals; what, in advanced 'dressing-stations'; what, in field ambulances. He perceived that rivers and canals were, at that time, often the quickest way of transport, and organised a whole water-service. But this war, as such, came to an end. But what war ever finishes—or has, so far, finished? There were new wars, e.g., in Croatia in 1601 when at once recourse was had to the Camillans and in which Fr. Girolamo Bevilacqua "of gigantic stature and herculean strength" played a notable part. It is important to see that the Camillans served *any* sufferers whom they encountered, Turks as well as Imperialists and Italians—the negative idea of 'neutrality' was already and at once out-passed and the universal active service of men for Christ's sake was immediately reached.

It is impossible to relate in detail the wars, or the war-service of the Camillans, which followed. Even *before* hostilities opened (e.g., in 1672 between Carlo Emanuele and Genoa), they were asked to serve; and almost everywhere in the thirty years' war (in Italy, 1627-1631) about which Mr. Aldous Huxley has written (*Grey Eminence*) relating all that was horrible—quite justly—but unable, one would say, to recognise all the good things that were happening between the extreme of mysticism, and the lowest of opportunism. I am sorry that I cannot devote even a line to the work of the Camillans during the sack of Mantua (1629-1630) which in reality meant the end of the Gonzaga clan. Wars, pestilence and famine—that Un-holy Trinity—followed over most of the world, and we could have much to say about Fr. P. Maricruz, military chaplain in the Peruvian Spanish army, who was shot, put (still alive) into a box, and thrown into the sea for refusing to say what men suspected of sedition had told him in confession. “We command you”, General Rodin said, “in the name of the King!” “I refuse”, said the priest, “in the Name of God.”

The sun of civilisation rose, of course, in mid-nineteenth century. The Camillans, suppressed, like many other orders, were found to be necessary after all during the blood-thirsty battles that went on from 1848, an ‘epic’ year, to 1859 when Solferino was fought. It is at this point that we have to ensure that the creation and development of the modern international Red Cross be seen in their right perspective. We have been kindly sent some information hitherto unknown to us. First, Nurse Agnes E. Parsy, S.R.N., writes in her book *The Story of the Growth of Nursing* as follows: “. . . to Queen Isabella (of Castille) seems to belong the credit of having introduced field hospitals and ambulances on a large scale. Speaking of the siege of Alora in 1484, the Spanish

historian Fernando del Pulgar writes: 'For the care of the sick and wounded the Queen always sent six large tents and their furniture, together with physicians, surgeons, medicines and attendants, and commanded that they should charge nothing, for she would pay for all. These tents were called the Queen's Hospitals.' On the surrender of Malaga in 1487, the Spanish army, on entering the besieged city, was followed by the Queen's Hospitals, in 400 'ambulancias'. At the siege of Granada in 1489, an eye-witness wrote to the Archbishop of Milan: 'Four huge hospital tents, the careful provision of queenly piety, are a sight worth seeing. They are intended not only for the wounded but for those labouring under any disease. The physicians, apothecaries, surgeons and other attendants are as numerous, the order, diligence and supply of all things needful, as complete, as in your own infirmary of the Holy Spirit or the great Milan hospital itself. Every sickness and casualty is met and provided for by the royal bounty except where Nature's appointed day is at hand.' The Queen herself frequently visited the wounded, and when her courtiers hinted that this was contrary to Castilian etiquette, she is said to have replied: 'Let me go to them, for they have no mothers here, and it will soothe them in their pain and weakness to find that they are not uncared for.' And the chronicler adds: 'Surely the Queen deserved as much as those ancient Greek and Roman princesses that famous title "*mater castrorum*".' Pedro Bosca records that the Queen's Hospital comprised nearly 400 waggons with awnings and that the wounded were not nursed by the highly unsuitable persons who usually follow armies but by honest and competent matrons. These waggons were called 'ambulancias'—probably the first use of the name and the first use of a mobile ambulance service with independent transport of medical store."

We are glad that due homage has thus been done to Queen Isabella; but we regret that the authoress continues: "It would seem as though, at one bound, the active mind of the Queen had reached an understanding of the needs of the wounded which the rest of the world failed to appreciate until four more centuries (*sic*) of human suffering had passed. It is strange that this great effort should have been almost an isolated one, and with the decay of the hospital tents and the falling to pieces of the waggons it should have died, and that wounded men should again lie on the battlefield for days and nights before any succour was given. And then, in the chaos of the Napoleonic wars and the European conflicts of the nineteenth century, it should be born again as the result of a Swiss traveller looking out over the battlefield of Solferino." Thus we see that the authoress is entirely unaware of the Camillan history: and as for what the 'Swiss traveller' (of whom more in a moment) saw when he thus 'looked out' over Solferino, I will quote Carlo Andersen: *En Skabone under Genferkorset* (Carl Allers Bogforlag, 1941, p. 120):

"Finally it must here be made clear that the Red Cross had already been seen on the battlefield of Solferino in 1859. From the cities of Verona, Mantua and Cremona about 100 Camillan Brothers (whose religious habit is black with a red cross on the right of the breast) took part in the voluntary health-service during and after the battle. Together with thirty-six nurses, headed by a French lady, they joined in a great work and most commendable. It does not greatly serve to the honour of the Protestant Dunant, that this strong infusion of Catholic Religious is not mentioned even by one word in his *Memories of Solferino*. He cannot possibly have been ignorant of it." In the same book, Note 11, p. 260, we find a short but sympathetic account of the origin of the Camillans. He

adds: "The religious impulse of the enterprise was more strongly emphasised among the Catholic Camillans than among the Protestant Johannites from Prussia: but both Orders take a prominent place in merciful work for humanity."¹

We are far from wishing to *decry* Dunant's work during battle: why, in the First Aid book published by the Danish Red Cross we read that there is an example of humane thinking in the Icelandic Viga Glums Sage (c. A.D. 1000), where we learn that Haldova, Glum's wife, had collected women and said: "We will bandage all there is hope of saving no matter to which side they belong." We rejoice, too, in this, which can hardly be other than an effect of Christianity. Nor is it quite true to say that social and moral 'discoveries' occur simultaneously in many places, rather as scientific ones do. Martin Gumpert in his book on Dunant writes: "The Civil War in the United States produced two things which are of lasting importance in American history: the United States Sanitary Commission and Clara Barton (her motto: 'Follow the Cannon'). It is astonishing how infallibly, again and again, in different parts of the world, things for which the right moment has come are realised simultaneously and independently. In the Civil War . . . the Sanitary Commission accomplished unheard-of triumphs. Even under the difficult circumstances resulting

¹Endelig skal det her fremhæves, at dette røde Kors allerede blev vist paa Slagmarken ved Solferino i 1859. Fra Byerne Verona, Mantova, og Cremona deltog e. 100 Kamillianerbrødre, hvis Ordendragt er sort med Rødt Kors paa højre Side af Brystet, i den frivillige Sanitætsjeneste under og efter Slaget. Sammen med 36 Plejersker, anført af en fransk Dame, udførte de et stort og paaskønrelaevaerdigt Arbejde. Det tjener ikke til større Aere for Protestanten Dunant, at denne store Indstats af katolski Ordensbrødre ikke omtales med et Ord i "Ereindringer fra Solferino". Han kan umuligt hav vaeret udvende om det . . . Gerningens religiøse moment var staerkere betonet mellem de katolske Kamillianere end mellem Preussens Johanniter, men begge Ordener intager en fremskudt Stilling i det menneskekaerlige Barmhertigheds arbejder.

from the duration of the struggle, the climate, the enormous masses of men, the deficient military apparatus (he might almost have been describing St. Camillus's circumstances), it made the first (*sic*) attempt uniformly to organise the care of the sick and wounded on hygienic principles. Much that seemed Utopian in Dunant's proposals for Europe was translated into fact on the battlefields of South America without his knowledge. Nearly 2,000 women served as nurses in the Civil War. They contributed substantially towards the victory by their Samaritanism, which had until then been a privilege of the Catholic Church, but which was foreign to Protestantism. In Germany since 1836 there had been the Deaconesses; in England, the Protestant Sisters of Charity had been organised since 1840; in 1848, the Sisters of Mercy; in 1851, the Sisterhood of All Saints, etc. In 1860 Florence Nightingale founded the school for Sisters at St. Thomas's hospital in London. *But all these organisations still bore essentially the character of religious Orders.*—Florence Nightingale was the first Samaritan on a field of battle. Dunant followed at Solferino. And Clara Barton . . . was the third in this spiritual league which brought the humanitarian movement of the century." Clara Barton went to Europe to recuperate, met the Red Cross, and returned to America and worked for years to get the States to sign the Geneva Convention. They were the thirty-second country to do so.

The italics above are mine. They indicate that the author at least *knew* that organised charitable work—on battlefields included—had previously existed, and had been done by religious Orders. And, given that St. Camillus's Order badge was a large Red Cross, I cannot see why we have not the right to call it "the First Red Cross". Negatively, the modern 'Red Cross' is *not* a

religious Order: its badge is *not* a Christian symbol (though, as I said, I expect that most people think it is and are, in fact, animated by a Christian wish to relieve suffering and remove its causes). Positively, it is internationally accepted by Governments, which is a very good thing; but even had Camillus thought of trying to get his organisation thus internationally agreed to, he would not have succeeded, simply because it *was* a religious Order and no Protestant Government would have agreed to a convention even if the Catholic ones would have, and it would have entered no one's head to make a convention with the Turks. It remains that Camillans were perfectly ready to succour the wounded of enemy armies if they could, and were themselves international or rather, super-national. The Camillans with whom I am just now in touch are mostly Dutch: but they belong to the same organisation as the Italian and German Camillans, and would certainly co-operate with them in assisting the wounded or the sick, should occasions arise which would make it possible. Nurse Parsy writes quite explicitly: “. . . the plain red cross on a white ground was officially authorised because it was realised that it must be clearly distinguishable from a distance, and that any heraldic details might lead to errors of observation; but the convention of 1906 also emphasised the fact that the emblem had no religious significance. This was necessary in order to preserve uniformity, for Turkey had already replaced the cross by the crescent.”¹

¹The psychology seems to me inadequate. It is quite impossible to divest the Cross of a religious significance. The Cross was really introduced in compliment to General Dufour who had invented the Swiss flag, a small white cross on a red ground. Presumably Turkish and Persian susceptibilities were not at the moment thought of. When it was too late or undesirable to change—e.g. by substituting a red square, or dividing the badge into quarters, gules and argent—it had to be explained that the Cross meant nothing religious.

Dunant himself in his book 'Memoirs of Solferino' said that the basic ideas of his Red Cross were comprised in four points: preparation in advance: neutralisation of doctors and nurses: uniform emblem; and extension of its activities to include natural catastrophes. The original resolution laid down the two essential foundations of the Red Cross—'internationalisation, and centralisation in Geneva to ensure freedom from partisan or religious tie-ups'. We see then that nothing in Dunant's four points is *not* in Camillus's ideal, save the political neutralisation of Red Cross officers and institutions which is certainly very important but could not have been conceived in Camillus's day: if had it been manageable, doubtless Camillus would have suggested it: as it was, we repeat that his society was spiritually super-national—but then, Geneva had to get rid of 'religious tie-ups'. As things are the religious and the secular Red Cross have co-operated remarkably well. Not only, at the battle of Custoza (1886), the unbounded charity of the citizens of Verona displayed itself equally towards Austrians and Italians, but the Camillans of Verona and Mantua not only served in all the hospitals, including the official military one, but established little hospitals at the very doors of the railway stations. In 1867 and in Rome itself in 1870, Fr. Ferrini led his Camillans wearing *both* red crosses—their own, the large one, as usual on their breast, the new little Genevan one on their arm; the same in France in the war of 1870 and in hospital-ships later on. The same collaboration was effected in the world-war of 1914 especially in Germany, some of the Camillans serving at the front and others managing hospital trains as well as their own hospitals; they also manned a hospital train provided by the Knights of Malta, of which the German Empress said that it was the finest and most practically organised of all the hospital-

trains she had so far seen. In Rome they worked in their own houses and in others placed at the disposal of the Geneva Red Cross and I have an interesting photograph of the Camillan house at Cremona with the *two* crosses working in unison. Benedict XV in May 1915 wrote to the Camillan General a letter of thanks and admiration for the enormous number of wounded men succoured by the Camillans especially in Germany and Austria.

Therefore, so far as I can see, the 'religious tic-ups' of the Camillans meant a bond which united them by charity with Christ, and that while the official, mechanical and international organisation of the Geneva Red Cross is of incalculable value to all the world for which we are duly grateful, the essence of the work had been carried on, with the infinite enhancement of a spiritual impulsion, under the same emblem with a nobler meaning, ever since St. Camillus and indeed from the earliest days of active Christianity.

We may at once hear the objection that the Camillans being Religious their numbers must always remain very small, whereas innumerable laymen and women can co-operate with the Red Cross, even though they do not make it their wholetime task. Camillus, however, from the outset wished to have groups of lay collaborators, and as briefly as possible I will allude to a few of these of which the first is to be found in Naples. If we remember the social framework of those times, it is the more impressive to find that these bands of regular visitors to hospitals were chiefly composed of persons of the highest rank, even royalties and Cardinals: eye-witnesses relate their amazement when they saw them 'cleaning the sick men's tongues, and their hair' and cleansing and bandaging wounds, that reeked so horribly that one could hardly imagine so much as standing near them. The custom became general in Italy and Sicily and then

extended itself to Spain where princes and grandees would pay similar visits, daily, both to hospitals and prisons. This lasted for two centuries, when political upheavals and the anticlericalism which went hand in hand with the Enlightenment destroyed all that was noblest along with much that was worthless in such countries. Yet even in 1796 the ever-upspringing fount of Catholic charity created new such organisations, such as the *Fratellanza degli Spedalieri* at Verona. The bishop himself, nobles and many another, dressed in the hospital uniform, would serve even all night at the humblest tasks. Women often had their own 'third order', like that to which the very holy Rosa Grimaldi of Bologna belonged, beginning her work in 1739: the French groups, especially one at Paris, did heroic services during the Napoleonic wars, but, being chiefly devoted to work during epidemics, ultimately expired.

I must mention specially Mother Giuseppina Vannini, of whose Life I have read only the German version translated from the Italian of 1927—*Eine Caritasblume*. She was born in 1859 of working-parents in Rome, both of whom died in her childhood: till she was twenty-one she stayed with the St. Vincent Sisters near Sant' Onofrio. Determined to be a Religious, she was sent to their noviciate but returned after a year, ill, to an aunt. She went back, but in 1888 was dismissed without being told why. She then stayed with the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament doing manual work and then went to Naples to teach it among the St. Vincent Sisters, but misunderstandings arose and she came back to Rome aged thirty-one. These abortive enterprises remind one somewhat of Camillus's own. Her Lazarist confessor obtained leave for her to assist at a retreat preached to the Cenacle nuns by a Camillan, Fr. Tezza, who—half jestingly—asked her if she would like to found a religious Order 'to her own taste', and then

suggested she might fall in with his own ideas. On Feb. 2, 1892 she and two others put on the Camillan scapular and after a spell of extreme poverty spent in visiting the sick found that their numbers increased. They asked Leo XIII for official recognition, but he would have no more religious Orders in Rome. So in 1893 she made private vows and the first house was opened in Cremona. The new Congregation developed well, but was not allowed in Rome, though she took over the management of a clinic there and extended her work to the care of defective children. Her Congregation began to develop outside Italy—France, Belgium, Germany, the Argentine. In 1909 it became a regular Congregation with simple vows. In April 1910 she began a tour of all her Italian houses, went on to Belgium, and returned to Rome just a week before her cabin had been booked for America. However, there she had to go to bed exhausted and endured six months' illness of which one month was a Purgatory of depression and fear. She died on Feb. 23, 1911, not yet fifty-one.

But here you perceive the tendency of Catholic good works to revert to the form of Religious Institutes. I like therefore to recall those 'Lay Apostles of the Sick and Dying: the Society of the Guilds of St. Camillus de Lellis' (an account has been written by Fr. J. Kelly, O. S. Cam.; Irish Messenger Office, Dublin; 1939), which was founded in Dublin in 1921. Originally it was meant to visit only the sick of the South Dublin Union, but the Order of the Ministers of the Sick heard of it, sent it a statute, and immense expansion was seen as necessary. In 1930 the Apostolate was affiliated to the Order and in 1934 an Irish Camillan foresaw the extension of the apostolate to the sick of the whole world, whether in their homes, in hospitals, workhouses or any other sort of asylum. No fee or reward is in any case allowed. Our

Lady Health of the Sick is its patroness. Her earliest picture is allegedly by Fra Angelico and belonged to St. Pius V. Then it was bequeathed to the Camillans and exposed for *veneration* in the Maddalena. It was 'crowned', but when Rome was conquered by Napoleon in 1827, the crown has to be sold for war-debts. In the nineteenth century, epidemics beset Rome; an arch-Confraternity was formed—it is said that not one of its members fell sick. When Leo XIII was eighty-nine and had to be operated on, a triduum was held at the Maddalena: he recovered, went himself to pick flowers in the Vatican gardens and sent them to the church. This is the special 'devotion' of the Guilds. It is not necessary to describe in detail the organisation of these Guilds, but it seems very practical, that is, for Ireland where everyone is Catholic. The sheer fact of its being 'practical' therefore implies that it would be modified in different circumstances. But anyone can see what a help it is that such a lay organisation should exist, and be composed of men and women in different walks of life—in barracks, workshops, factories, clubs, schools. For thus innumerable more sick—sick of body or soul or both—are likely to become known, than if their discovery were entrusted wholly to priests. This is particularly important when the Last Sacraments are concerned. Pius X greatly encouraged such work by giving the privilege, in 1905, of a portable altar to all Camillan priests. If a bed-ridden and dying person has not been to Mass for a long time, it will be a great comfort for him actually to assist once more at the Mass that he knew and had neglected before dying.

I should feel myself disloyal to one great ideal of Camillus's were I not to insist for a moment on the giving of Viaticum to those in danger of death. The Codex of Canon Law (864, I) emphasises the precept of giving Holy Communion to those in danger of death *from*

whatsoever cause. Camillus can be said to be the only Apostle of this sacramental duty. He insisted that Viaticum must 'absolutely be given', and by this he meant 'in spite of every difficulty', and of these difficulties—apart from that of knowing when someone is dangerously ill—the worst is the fear of *others* that the sick person may be 'frightened'. The idea is due to ignorance—they do not know that the *point* of extreme Unction, at any rate, is the cure of the sick person, if that cure be God's will, for evidently the sick will not always and for ever be cured, but someday will die. None the less, the Church keeps asking that the sick man may recover and be restored to his customary work in the Church. It is due also to an unconseious paganism—i.e. that a man must at all costs be kept physically alive so long as possible—even when unconscious, and, short of a miracle, certain to die. But you do not obtain miracles by disregarding the most powerful (because supernatural) remedy that exists. It has been said that every Sacrament has its special enemy—e.g., there are those who defer baptism indefinitely, whereas in days of more robust faith, a child was baptised, if at all possible, the very day after its birth: others deprecate frequent Communion: others turn Confirmation into a social event: some have abolished Ordination altogether: and God knows how many enemies Marriage has! The enemy of Viaticum are the Healthy. To delay Viaticum and Unction is 'the most cruel persecution and harmful fraud that the devil could invent to remain master of the field.' The ultimate moment has come which decides defeat or victory.¹

As always, we beg pardon if we have written ill or misleadingly about a Saint indeed, about any fellow-

¹ There is a good little pamphlet read by Fr. G. Curti, Pref. General of the Ministers of the Sick at their third Regional Eucharistic Congress at Chieti in Sept. 1929.

human, of whom God alone is the judge. We might more easily be excused for asking whether we think that the Camillan Order will prosper in the modern world. We think that it will experience most of its ancient difficulties (save that of continued infection the risk of which is now so largely obviated), for we expect the world to be periodically victim to those waves of anti-clericalism which constantly surged across the old world, and in any case, there will be the more cold-blooded desire to bring everything, hospitals of course included, under the direct control of the State and indeed into its possession. But we do *not* think that the fact that Camillans are Catholics will stand in their way, if only because in whatever continent we have been, we have found Catholic hospitals packed with non-Catholic patients. I have heard the argument that the proper persons to be nurses are women: nursing is in their nature—not in men's. I expect there will always be more women-nurses than men-nurses: but there is much heavy work which, it seems to me, women ought hardly to be asked to do; I have experienced excellent nursing at the hands of men; and presumably what is happening now will continue to happen—collaboration. In no hospital in which I have been were women-nurses able to do all that was necessary, nor would I wish them to try. But the most plausible argument probably is that *all* 'voluntary' hospitals are bound to be inefficient and have to resort to precarious methods for raising funds, like bazaars, 'rags', broadcast appeals and so forth. So far, voluntary hospitals have seemed to me even more efficient than State-run hospitals; but that may have been chance. I certainly hold that there should be a State Health-Department to which a due percentage of public money ought to be allocated: but the State, in its turn, ought to allocate a certain amount of that money to 'voluntary' or 'private' hospitals, as it ought to to

'confessional' schools, for example. Ought then such schools or hospitals to be entirely free from State supervision? Most certainly not. The State has every right to see that they are kept up to a proper level of efficiency, somewhat as I think property ought to be owned privately, but may well be 'controlled' by the State in this sense, that if land is needed and not used, it could either be expropriated with due compensation and applied to the needed purposes, or, left in private ownership provided it was properly used by its owner. Anyhow, I have never known a 'private' hospital which was not fully open to the inspection of government officials, and their approbation is very highly valued. As for the Camillan hospital at Aalborg, it is not only recognised as fully efficient, but as one of the finest ornaments of the town, so noble is its church, built—if I may risk calling it so—in the Danish-Romanesque tradition.

But I end as I began: we all do homage to the noble work done by nurses, doctors, surgeons and all their collaborators whatever their creed—and indeed if they do their most unselfish work even for purely philanthropic reasons. If they do it exclusively for the sake of earning their living, we do not think it will be done so perfectly as it would be if some 'spiritual ideal' lay behind it. But if it be their happiness to possess the Faith which enables them to do it for the sake of Christ, and indeed to see and serve Christ in the person of their patients, and to pray for them, and never to forget the soul while ministering to the body, then indeed their work should be perfect, and their very presence a healing one, as Christ's was, unless indeed He met with an obstinate will set against His ministrations.

In Camillus's person, you see all these qualities raised to their very highest power. His unselfishness was displayed not only in the work that he, so physically strong,

so mentally indomitable, did for the sick in the most horrible circumstances, but in the fact that he was all the time suffering such physical pain himself that he might have been forgiven had he stayed all his life in hospital as a permanent invalid, being waited on. But he thrust all that behind him, even if he could not actually forget it. And besides that, you have to remember that he had to achieve the most tremendous self-conquest in his interior life itself: he was not a Saint from his cradle—very much the opposite. But having burnt what he once adored, he, after many a bitter disappointment, found, first, his true work at which he laboured till the evening, and then, after that strange quarter of an hour, his Refreshment.

